







SCENES AND STORIES FROM THE LAND  
OF IDOLS.



*BY THE SAME AUTHOR,*  
*And Uniform with this Volume.*

1. HALF-HOURS WITH THE HINDUS.
2. PICTURES OF LIFE IN INDIA.

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LONDON : WARD, LOCK, & BOWDEN, LTD.





DEALERS IN PRAYER-WHEELS; DARJEELING.

# SCENES AND STORIES

FROM

## THE LAND OF IDOLS.

BY

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WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

WARD, LOCK, & BOWDEN, LTD.

LONDON: WARWICK HOUSE, SALISBURY SQUARE, E.C.

NEW YORK, AND MELBOURNE.

1894.

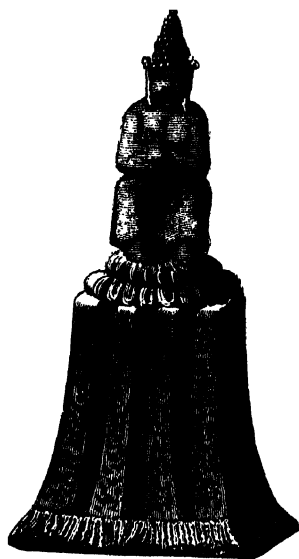
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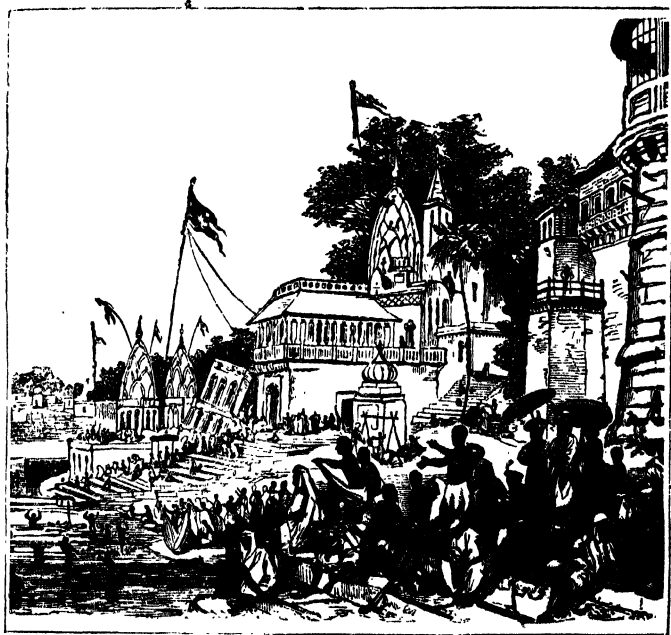




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FESTIVAL AT BENARES: WASHING IN THE HOLY RIVER GANGES.

## I.

### *MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.*

**T**HE manners and customs of the people of India are an endless source of interest to visitors from Europe. All is so very different from what we are accustomed to at home, that we cannot but notice and comment on what we see and hear of the character of the people, their way of life, and general appearance.



Everything seems to be turned topsy-turvy, and it takes new arrivals in the East some time to get used to the remarkable change. "The Oriental, has an odd way of doing everything backwards, as it seems to us, though from his point it is we who turn everything upside down. Their saw, for example, has the teeth set towards the handle, and the carpenter pulls it towards him ; their screws turn the wrong way ; their writing begins at the wrong end ; they take off their shoes and keep on their hats, while we take off our hats and keep on our shoes ; they beckon with the finger held downwards ; and, strangest of all, if a man wishes to spite his enemy he occasionally does so by hurting himself."

Thus in both thought and action the people of the East differ radically from the people of the West, and these facts have to be taken into consideration when we desire to form an estimate of the character of the natives of India. We must take care that we do not condemn others simply because they differ from ourselves, for it does not necessarily follow that our ways of thinking and acting are the only true and right ways.

. The *morning bath* is a favourite custom of the East, and it would be well if it were as widely followed in the West. It is a remarkable sight, in the early morning in India, to observe the natives of all ages and of both sexes going down to the river or the tank, and there performing their ablutions with great care and every appearance of enjoyment. Of course the hot climate favours the practice, for no one is afraid of cold water or of a chill. The boys and girls

of India have not to be driven or coaxed to the river for their bath, as they are always delighted when the hour comes round, for it is one of the enjoyments of their life.



WORSHIPPING THE GANGES.

The custom of bathing is associated with religion. I do not know that the Hindus believe that "cleanliness is next to godliness," but they certainly affirm that their gods are pleased with them if they attend

regularly and punctiliously to their ablutions. If you watch the bathers closely you will observe that their lips move as if in prayer. They are in reality dedicating themselves to their idols, and praying that they may be cleansed from all defilement, incurred by touch, taste, deed, word or thought, known or unknown.

Unfortunately the people are not as particular as they ought to be with regard to the purity of the water in which they bathe. The river, of course, is all right, but sometimes the tanks in which they wash themselves are stagnant pools of filth and corruption, and are dangerous to health. It would be a great gain for India if the Imperial Government appointed inspectors of the tanks, whose duty it would be to see that all places of public ablution were kept in proper repair and free from all injurious matter. As it is, the universal custom of bathing in the East, which ought to be a great public blessing, is very often a means of propagating numerous diseases.

Amongst both Hindus and Moslems *morning salutations* are freely exchanged. Not only will friend greet friend, but neighbours will greet neighbours, and even strangers greet strangers. In the West we content ourselves usually, if we address people at all, with a brief "Good morning !" but in the East the salutation is invariably in the name of the Deity. Two Mohammedans meeting or passing one another, will commend each other to Allah ; while two Hindus will commend each other to Rama or some other god. It seems to me a very pleasing custom.

The Hindus have a curious custom of marking the forehead, and rubbing other parts of the body with ashes, in the early morning, and these *caste or sectarian marks* are retained throughout the day. It is a disfiguring custom, and serves no good end, while at times it leads to strife. There are about seventy distinguishing marks in all, most of which are placed on the arms and breast. The face marks are the fewest, but they are the most striking. These marks consist of spots, circles, triangles, straight lines, curved lines, crescents, simple or in combination, and of varied colours. Thus a simple spot on the forehead symbolises Brahma the Supreme Being, while a spot in the centre of a circle inclosed in a triangle, symbolises the Hindu Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. Some sects adopt a mark like an eccentric cross with the four points bent. Some are simply marked with three white lines, while others have perpendicular stripes. A small horizontal line on the forehead denotes having bathed—in fact, being ready for society.

The Hindus spend a lot of thought and time every morning over these sectarian marks, time which would be better spent in quiet meditation and prayer. I dislike the custom chiefly, however, because it makes a public display of differences in religious opinions, and thus helps to perpetuate feelings of class hatred.

In association with the morning bath, and at other times during the day, the people of India pay great *attention to their teeth*. It is a fact that Eastern people do not suffer anything like as much from decayed teeth as Western people, and one reason

probably is because they clean their teeth daily with great care. Tooth brushes are not used. Indeed the Hindus think our custom of using tooth brushes to be a most unclean and disgusting one, inasmuch as we do not have new ones daily, for the touch of saliva is deemed utterly polluting. The people of India simply use a piece of stick, usually the wood of a tamarind or nim tree, for purposes of teeth cleansing.

Miss Cumming, writing on this custom in her work on India, says: "Every Hindu bestows infinite care on his teeth, which he polishes vigorously with a soft flat stick, about the width of a finger. This is an important religious action, and must be preceded by ceremonially rinsing the mouth on awakening. As you pass through a native town in the early morning it seems as if the whole population had turned out of their houses to perform this part of their toilet in public, and such an amount of scraping and polishing goes on that you marvel how any enamel is left." The result is exceedingly satisfactory, however, for almost every mouth displays rows of dazzling ivory, and dentists are almost without occupation. In the matter of thorough attention to their teeth, English boys and girls might do well to imitate the people of India. Sound teeth, it should be borne in mind, are not only pleasant to look at, but are conducive to good health and good temper.

*Dress* is not a matter which very much exercises the attention of the millions of India. Some of the rich people put on beautiful and even costly clothing, but the common people are if anything too careless with regard to their apparel. Of course in a hot

climate very little clothing is needed, but decency requires that some should be used. Commonly, children go about quite naked, unless a string round the waist, with a key or coin attached to it, can be called a garment. The key is worn as a charm to keep away evil influences from the little ones. When boys and girls reach the age of five or six clothing is worn, but it is even then very scanty, consisting only of a cloth round the loins. And with the poor all through life very little more is worn even in the rainy or cold weather. Sometimes at night a sheet is wrapped round the body for warmth. Among well-to-do people the ordinary female dress is the sàree—a piece of cloth, between nine and ten cubits long, and two or two-and-a-half cubits broad, which is worn round the waist with one end covering the shoulders and the head. Of men the ordinary dress everywhere is the *dhoti*, which is wrapped round the middle of the body, and tucked up between the legs, while a part of it hangs down in front a good deal below the knees. A *chadur* is also used by people who can afford to have one, and is worn over the shoulders.

Of late years in the cities some of the native gentlemen have taken to imitating Europeans in their dress. It is surely a mistake. The native garments when ample and of good material look very picturesque, and are more suitable for an Eastern climate than European clothing. I do not suppose that the people generally will ever be foolish enough to discard their national costume, though it is to be hoped that the poorer classes will be led to be more particular with

respect to the decency of their personal appearance. Neatness and cleanliness in dress, both in the West and the East, are greatly to be desired on the part both of young people and adults, and in all classes of society.

Stockings are very seldom used by the natives of India ; nor, indeed, are they needed. Shoes also are not common amongst the Hindus, though the Mohammedans wear them. The poorer classes, both male and female, especially in Bengal, go barefoot, and experience no inconvenience from the custom. Even amongst Mohammedans it is considered only reverent to take off their shoes when entering the courtyards of their mosques, and only respectful to leave them at the door when entering the dwelling house of a friend or stranger. Bare feet have always been regarded as signs of politeness in the East, just as a bare head has been in the West. Eastern people keep the head covered on all occasions both indoors and out, as a general rule, though recently in the large cities custom has been varying on this matter and also on the shoe question. The fact is, the presence of Europeans in India is slowly but surely working a change in some of the manners and customs of the people, and has certainly affected this time-honoured practice of taking off the shoes as a mark of respect. However, the change as yet is chiefly confined to the educated classes of society and to cities. The people as a whole still keep the head covered and the feet bare in the presence of those whom they regard as their social superiors.

Both Hindus and Mohammedans are apt to carry

their civility to the verge of *servility* and beyond it on occasion. The people of India lack what we might call a proper feeling of respect, what the French designate *amour propre*. A little more manliness and independence of character would be beneficial to the whole country. Very few of the people seem to have a mind or a will of their own in the presence of superiors. Indeed, the manners of the natives of India may be represented as cringing.. In addressing a superior they will use such terms as "Lord," "Provider for the poor," "Representative of God," "Your worship," and so on ; while they speak of themselves with the utmost humility as "Your slaves"

There is a story told of a Lieutenant Governor of the North-west Provinces entering a public school on one occasion to question the lads as to their progress in knowledge. The pupils were overpowered by the honour done them, and seemed scarcely to know whether they were standing on their feet or their heads. Matters came to a climax, and the gravity of the great man was completely upset when, in answer to a question he had put as to what makes the earth go round the sun, the head scholar of the school exclaimed solemnly and earnestly, "Sir, the earth revolves by favour of your highness." Is not such servility disgraceful? Yet amongst men as well as boys in the East it is all too common. Why, I have known a servant in my own house in Calcutta, when I was displeased with him, fall down on the floor, and attempt to put one of my feet upon his neck as a sign of the most complete self-abasement and submission to my will. Such conduct was always a trial to me.



I like manliness, and thoroughly despise such servility. The people of India greatly need to be taught "self-respect," without which no people can be honoured and no nation can be great.

Yet, strange to say, while true self-respect is lacking in the Hindus and Mohammedans they are *not troubled as a rule with diffidence*, and they cannot be regarded as modest in their estimate of themselves. The Rev. F. H. Blackett, late of the Cambridge Mission, Delhi, writing on this point, says, "There is in all of these a serene self-complacency which is not easily disturbed, and is a source of great weakness and a great obstacle to their moral improvement, its root being obviously in the absence of any high external standard. Natives of India are not troubled with any excessive reserve on their own merits; if these are not readily apparent to others they are always willing to supply the deficiency." Thus *conceit* flourishes though self-respect does not.

*Inquisitiveness* is another failing of the people of India. They think that everybody's business is their business, and they do all they can to find out what salary you get, what failings or virtues you may have, and other matters of private interest. For instance, the servants in the house of a European will obtain keys to open drawers and desks when the master's back is turned, and will count money, and read any correspondence they find, if they can. I have known a packet of love-letters disappear for a few days, and then be brought back again. In all probability the precious parcel was placed for a while in the hands of some one who could read English, and who for a

consideration would tell the inquisitive servant what the contents were. Such meddlesomeness seems unbearable, but English people in India get used to it in time, and put up with it simply because they cannot mend matters. As education spreads in the land, and the laws of morality are taught even to the servants, we may hope for a change for the better. "Paul Prys" are not pleasant people to have to deal with.

Even amongst the more respectable classes in India the inquisitorial spirit is very strongly developed, and it does not do to be too sensitive at the questions that may be asked by acquaintances or by entire strangers. Let me quote some remarks on this point which occur in the book called "Everyday Life in South India." Coopooswamey, the author of the work, says: "It was now about four o'clock in the afternoon, and as we slowly jogged along we passed many people returning to their villages from the market. One man took hold of the back of our cart to help him along. My father entered into conversation with him, and asked many questions regarding his business at the market and other private matters. I have observed there is a great difference between Hindus and Europeans in this respect. An Englishman is offended if you ask him where he is going, where he has come from, his object in coming, his profession, the amount of his salary and the like; whereas a Hindu regards such inquiries as an indication of polite and kindly interest in him. He will answer freely, though not always truthfully, all your queries, and will, by magnifying his salary, and in other ways, seek to give you a high opinion of his importance."

Coopooswamey in the foregoing quotation seems to imply that the Hindu custom of communicativeness is better than the English one of reserve. It may be that English people are too reserved ; but I incline to the conviction that less inquisitiveness on the part of the people of India would be better for all parties concerned, especially as so much asking of questions inevitably leads to much telling of lies. It is a good thing to study, to be quiet and to mind our own business.

Except amongst the well-to-do in India the houses of the people have *very little furniture* in them. Chairs and tables are almost unknown. The people usually sit or recline on a mat on the ground, and sleep on a little framework of bamboo called a charpoy. At any moment in India a man could easily take up his bed and walk. Our custom of sitting on chairs seems very comical to the natives who live in country places, if they happen to enter a European house. I well remember the perplexity of a young man who was brought by an evangelist to see me in Calcutta, when I offered him a chair and asked him to sit down. He stared at the chair in amazement, and then, feeling that he ought to do something, he first stood upon it, and then doubling up his feet under him sat on it in true Eastern fashion like a tailor on his bench.

The habit the natives have of sitting on the ground poised on the soles of their feet is a very peculiar one also. It is a position in which a European would have difficulty in retaining his balance, and yet the Hindus adopt it as an attitude of rest. A coachman, for instance, will get off his comfortable box directly



AN INDIAN HAREM.



the carriage stops anywhere, and will squat in the dust and poise himself on the soles of his feet with his shoulders almost between his knees, and enjoy himself resting thus by the hour together, while waiting for his master and mistress.

It is a custom in India to *dismiss a visitor* who may have called upon you when you think he has stayed long enough. Of course in England it would be considered the height of rudeness to do such a thing, but in the East it is a right course to take. Mr. Minturn, in his book entitled "From New York to Delhi," relates an experience he had with a visitor in his travels, who bored him greatly, owing to his ignorance of this Eastern custom. When in the neighbourhood of Benares, he wrote: "On my return to the Dak Bungalow, I was accosted by the Zemindar of the village, a mild-looking young Mussulman, who asked permission to come in and see me. This being granted he sat down while I breakfasted. It soon came out that his object was to practise his English upon me. He presented me with his card in Persian, and I gave him mine in English, and we kept up quite a conversation on the propriety of Mussulmans eating with Christians, which they refuse to do in India. He afterwards began begging for books, paper, and other things, and offered to sell me his ring, when I became disgusted and dismissed him. His visit was longer than he intended it to be, from my ignorance of the Indian usage which forbids a visitor to depart until he has received permission from his host. I had been hoping he would go; and when he began begging, expressed my wishes to my servant,

who advised me to say, 'There is permission to depart,' when he looked very grateful, put on his shoes, salaamed, and quickly left."

*Untruthfulness and dishonesty* are bad traits of Eastern character. To tell a lie seems, I am afraid, to many Hindus and Mohammedans, as natural as to tell the truth. Missionaries, in their dealings with young people in the colleges and schools, have great difficulty in getting them to understand that it is wrong to deceive, wrong to tell lies, and wrong to purloin articles that belong to others.

Europeans, in association with native servants, find the same absence of truthfulness and honesty. Taking them altogether, servants in India are useful and faithful; but it seems almost impossible for them to be straightforward and upright in all their conduct. The fact is, there is no religious teaching on these questions of morality, and the example of the so-called gods of the land, particularly Krishna and Siva, is very injurious, for they are credited with doing all kinds of wicked things. I was fortunate in my servants while in India; but still every now and then something would disappear from the house. I would miss money out of my pockets, and writing paper out of my desk, and various ornaments and curiosities I had collected would vanish from the walls and no more be seen or heard of.

One night I missed a new silk umbrella on which I had just turned my back for a moment. As I felt sure it could not have been taken away, but must be hidden somewhere in the house, I called the servants together and asked them to assist me in finding it.

Our search was in vain. However, at midnight I ransacked the house again on my own account, and at last came across the missing article stowed away behind the sideboard in the dining-room. Foolishly, I resolved to leave it there till morning, and then show it to the servants, and try to convict one of them of hiding it with felonious intent. After breakfast I marshalled the whole household and led them to the sideboard ; but the thief had been too sharp for me, for the umbrella was no longer there. Words fail me to describe my chagrin at the discovery. As for the servants, not a muscle of their countenances moved, though I could see from the sparkle in their eyes that they were enjoying my discomfiture. I had to buy another umbrella.

Another bad custom of Eastern people is that of running into *debt*. It is noticeable in all classes of society, and even amongst native Christians, who ought to know better, and who ought to set a better example to their non-Christian countrymen. Debt incurred chiefly in connection with marriage ceremonies, which are celebrated on a grand scale ; and once in debt it is almost impossible for the poorer classes to get free, as the money-lenders charge high interest, and it is all the people can do to meet the payments as they fall due. Thus many of the people are kept for life under the yoke of debt.

The Rev. F. H. Blackett, in his "Two Years in an Indian Mission," says : "The native of India is always in debt. There was a village near Delhi where the people were poor, but free from debt. A canal was made, and the value of the land thereby much in-



creased : the people became prosperous, and also got into debt. The reason why they were not in debt before was that their land was too poor to serve as a security, but as soon as that was improved they could raise money on the security of their crops, and promptly did so. If a native is not in debt it is generally because no one will lend him anything." Truly it is a sad state of things, and there is great need for a reformation in the matter of debt. This bad practice is one of the curses of India, and is the source of endless trouble and sorrow. It is a subject on which missionaries often speak to the people, quoting to them the Apostolic injunction, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."

One of the sights of India, and one which my young readers would be sure to notice if they travelled in the East, is the *barbers plying their razors in the streets and the market-places*. The Hindus never shave themselves, though it is a general custom to be shaved. The Mohammedans seldom shave, as the beard is sacred, being a passport to Mecca and to Paradise. Amongst the Hindus the people called Rajputs and some others allow the beard to grow, but the general practice is to have the face and part of the head shaved. I have often stood in the street and watched with curiosity and amusement the skilful operations of the barber, who, with a miserable apology for a razor, would industriously scrape away at the chins and craniums of his customers. I noticed that a small tuft was always left on the top of the head; and this, I was told, rightly or wrongly, was left for the convenience of celestial messengers, who would thus

be able, after death, to clutch the Hindus struggling in "the sea of sin," and drag them through to the shores of the Better Land. Religion, you see, in India, even plays a part in the shaving of the head. Is it not a foolish and superstitious custom?

The women-folk amongst the Hindus do not have the head shaved except when they become widows. The belief is that "the glory of the woman is her



STREET BARBER.

hair," and they encourage it to grow long, and will not, as a rule, voluntarily sacrifice a single hair. An exception is made, however, when they go on pilgrimage to Allahabad to bathe in the sacred confluence of the Ganges and Jumna, which takes place near that city. "Once a year, there, at the junction of the holy river, it is deemed the honourable privilege of a good wife, with her husband's sanction, to offer the tips of

her long hair, which are most solemnly cut off by the priests with golden scissors, while reciting prayers and verses from the sacred books. The hair thus sacrificed is laid on a metal dish, with a gift of coin from the husband. The priest takes the coin, and the holy river receives the hair." The deed is regarded as a meritorious one, sure to secure the favour and blessing of the gods.

*Smoking* is indulged in by young and old in India. I have seen mere children pulling away at the native pipe. Boys, however, never smoke in the presence of their parents, nor do students in the company of their tutors. It is not considered respectable for women to smoke, though many of them are known to do so and to like it. There seems indeed in India to be a perfect passion for the use of tobacco. That less harm results from the custom of smoking in the East than in the West is doubtless due to the fact that the smoke passes through water ere it reaches the mouth, and is thus greatly purified of the injurious nicotine, which is the bane of all smokers.

The ordinary Hindu pipe is a cocoanut shell filled with water. To this are fixed two tubes, the longer of which goes to the bottom of the water, while the other, which just enters the nut, has a clay cup attached to it to hold the weed. The tobacco mixed with molasses is so damp that it will not burn without the addition of a little charcoal. When the long tube is put to the mouth, and a vigorous breath is drawn, the smoky air coming through the water makes a gurgling sound, which has led to the expressive name of Hubble-Bubble being given to the

pipe. Many smokers dispense with the long tube, and put the mouth to the little hole in the cocoanut.

From morning till night the Hubble-Bubble is sucked as opportunity presents ; and sometimes a circle of friends may be observed having a good time together with just one pipe amongst them, which passes round the circle regularly if somewhat slowly. However, as time is no object in India, smokers patiently wait for their turn in the common pipe. For my part, I think it is a pity that the habit of smoking is indulged in so freely both in the West and the East. Boys, at any rate, would be better without it.

*The food* of the people of India is worthy of notice, as it differs from our own in the matter of meat. The Hindus are vegetarians. Ordinarily the diet is exceedingly simple and light—the solid food consisting mainly of rice, wheat or other grains, and of vegetables and fish ; and the drink of water and milk. The prejudice against butchers' meat is very strong, though occasionally a Hindu will eat a little goat's flesh or venison, if it has been sacrificed before an idol. Fruits are plentiful and cheap in the country and are largely eaten.

Knives and forks are not used at meals, nor even spoons. Plates also amongst the poorer classes are unknown, and the food is eaten off palm leaves or any other convenient leaf. It is surprising with what dexterity the Hindus can eat, and still more surprising to notice the quantity that disappears down their capacious throats. Of course it must be borne in mind that rice is not a very satisfying food, and quantity has to make up for quality.

Just after a meal, and at other times during the day, the natives of India may be observed *chewing what is called pân*. And what is pân? 'It is a tonic ingredient composed of betel-nut, lime, cinnamon, cardamus, and other spices, wrapped in a pân leaf and fastened with a clove. This concoction is put bodily into the mouth and vigorously chewed. The taste is aromatic and slightly astringent, and is said to aid digestion. A peculiarity of it is that it makes the saliva quite red, and thus gives a repulsive appearance to the mouth. It is a national custom to offer this pân or betel to guests, and it would be considered the height of rudeness to refuse it.

Europeans, however, invariably decline to take it, but they are excused on the ground of their nationality. It is a custom that Europeans cannot get used to, and generally regard with disgust. Miss Cumming tells us that when in the Himalayas she tried to take pân, but in vain. She writes: "All this time I found myself provided with an honorary escort, a white-robed moonshee or scribe, who had taken a lift on the top of my carriage, and who in return was continually bringing me fruit, and insisted on teaching me to chew betel-nut as the greatest delicacy he had to offer. It was unspeakably nasty, and I was thankful next day to find that my teeth were not permanently stained red."

Bishop Heber, however, had a better opinion of pân, for he wrote in his diary, on June 28th, 1824: "I tried chewing the betel to-day, and thought it not unpleasant; at least, I can easily believe that where it is fashionable people may soon grow fond of it. It is

warm and pungent. My servants fancy it is good for the teeth ; but they do not all take it. I see about half the crew without the stain on their lips ; but I do not think the teeth of the others are better."

What a noisy people the Hindus are, and the Mohammedans likewise ! They seem unable to talk without shouting, and they are ready at a moment's notice to have a wrangle over a few coppers. It used to be a grief to me to hear my servants loudly quarrelling over the veriest trifle ; and it was a distraction also, for the strife would usually continue for half an hour or more, and while it lasted it was impossible to study or to write with any comfort.

And what dreadful language was used ! It is said that no race on the face of the earth has so large a vocabulary of oaths as the Hindu. To call another "The child of an owl," "The son of a chicken," or "Toom gudha"—i.e., "You donkey !" is, comparatively speaking, to utter pleasant words. Much more dreadful execrations are used, and the people curse one another unto the third and fourth generation.

Yet while the natives of India are so free with abusive words, they *seldom proceed to blows*. Their swords are curses. If they do under great provocation proceed to violence, it is generally nothing worse than the knocking off of a turban or head-dress, or a resounding smack with the open hand, or a blow with slipper. No great harm is done. And once blows have been struck the people seem frightened with what has occurred, and the tumult immediately subsides.

In this matter Eastern people differ greatly from

Western, for with the latter one blow generally leads to another, and the strife grows fiercer and more deadly, and confusion becomes worse confounded. It is a pity that everywhere human beings have not more control over their angry passions. The Eastern saying is very true—"Greater is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." It is wise to "leave off strife before it be meddled with."

There are two words often used in the East to which I would call the special attention of my young readers. They are *pukka* and *cutch*. *Pukka* is used to express everything that is good, solid, and enduring, while *cutch* represents the opposite characteristics. For example, if a man is erecting a building of stone or bricks, and is putting good cement and plaster on the structure, then he is making what is called "a *pukka* job of it," but if he uses inferior materials it is called "*cutch* work." In architecture, the public buildings of Lucknow compared with those of Delhi are *cutch*; for though they have a good appearance to the outside view, they are not solid and enduring as well as beautiful like the latter.

Then, too, the people of the East speak of a *cutch* or *pukka* appointment, of a *cutch* or *pukka* road, and of *cutch* or *pukka* characters. The words are comprehensive and expressive, and might with advantage be taken over into our English vocabulary. Anyway, I hope that all who read this account of the manners and customs of the people of India will discriminate between the good and the bad, the temporary and the lasting, the *cutch* and the *pukka*, and judge accordingly.

I would conclude this chapter with a brief reference to the Eastern methods of *the disposal of the dead*. All the world over the day of death as well as the day of birth comes to every child of Adam. Methods of disposal of the dead, however, vary with different nationalities and races. The Parsees, about whom I shall give many particulars in a later chapter, expose their dead bodies on what are called Towers of Silence, until they crumble to dust. Mohammedans bury their dead in the earth much as Christians do. Hindus, however, burn their dead.

It is in my judgment a sad spectacle to go to a Hindu burning-ghaut and watch the bodies of young and old being brought to be cremated. As I stood near a ghaut one day on the banks of the Ganges, a dead man was carried past me, borne on four bamboos. The bearers chanted "Ram ! Ram ! Ram is the true God !" And those who followed with the fire and the sacred water answered, "What you say, brothers, is true !" Then the body was laid on the wood provided for it, a light was applied, and the corpse was slowly consumed. I remember at the time thinking that when my last hour arrived I should like to be in dear old England, and be buried in the graveyard of a church which I have known and loved for many years, where dear ones now lie at rest.

I prefer burial on the "earth to earth" principle to cremation. Yet it matters little, except for sanitary purposes, how our bodies are disposed of after death ! The great concern for us all, my young readers, is to live well. Then we shall find that, whether like the



Parsees we are "exposed," or like the Hindus we are "cremated," or like other races we are "buried"—"to die is gain."



DANCING GIRL, HYDERABAD.



INDIAN FAKIRS OR PENITENTS.

## II.

### *FAKIRS OR SAINTS.*

**I**N India there is a class of religious mendicants called Fakirs or Saints, about whom I am sure my young readers would like to have some account. If we look up the word fakir, in, say Webster's Dictionary, we find it explained thus—"An

Oriental religious ascetic or begging monk." I remember when in India, however, hearing a much fuller definition of the term. It was given by J. G. Shome, Esq., in a paper which he read before the Calcutta Missionary Conference on "Fakirism as a Mode of Evangelistic Work." Mr. Shome said: "Fakir is an Arabic word, and contains three principal letters *fe*, *caf*, and *re*. *Fe* stands for a word which means starvation, *caf* for a word which means contentment, and *re* for a word which means austerity. A fakir is a person who has these qualities."

Though of Arabian origin, the term fakir is applied in India both to Hindu and Moslem ascetics, though other names are also used, such as Gosains, Bairagis and Yogis. Though fakirs are generally regarded in the East as holy or saintly characters, much like the monks of Europe, yet in too many cases they are nothing of the kind, but a dirty, idle, dissolute community, living by their wits, and imposing upon the religious credulity and feelings of compassion of the people. The more thoughtful natives of India say that by far the great majority of fakirs are most pitiable characters, averse to labour, and inclined to take life easy by begging.

The clothing and general appearance of fakirs is most grotesque. The best dressed amongst them, the gentlemen of the profession, wear deep yellow or saffron robes, that being a sacred colour, pleasing to the gods. As a general rule, however, the clothing that is worn is simply a dirty rag round the loins, and a string of beads round the neck; while under the right arm may be seen a tiger's skin, and in the hand

a hollow gourd with which to draw water. The head presents the appearance of a filthy mass of tangled hair. It is difficult to imagine a more living picture of squalid wretchedness than these poor creatures of India called fakirs or saints.

Now and again a fakir may be seen in a country place absolutely naked—"sun-clad," as it is called. I saw one once at Gaya. To go about "sun-clad" was some time back very popular amongst the fraternity, but the British Government has very properly issued a bye-law against the custom. Still, however, it is practised in some places. Mr. Minturn, in his book of travels, says : "I noticed among the crowds in North India a good many fakirs, or religious mendicants. They generally wear little clothing, and are daubed over with streaks of mud. One of them was entirely naked, his hair dressed with feathers, and covered from head to foot with a yellow powder. I thought he must be cold in this costume (as it was the winter season) ; but I learned afterwards that it was a common dodge with the fakirs to rub this powder into the skin, as it occasions a slight cuticular irritation, and thus yields an artificial warmth."

In another part of his book Mr. Minturn says : "Another object of interest near Manpoor was a yogi. He was a youth of about twenty years, entirely naked, smeared with mud and cow-dung, and altogether one of the most disgusting beings I ever set my eyes on ; still, the inhabitants seemed to treat him with great veneration." In a most valuable work by Bishop Thoburn, of Calcutta, entitled, "My Missionary Apprenticeship," the following incident is found. At the

time the author was travelling in the Himalayas. "Late at night I went out for a little walk, and had made a turn up and down the little pathway by the tent, when I was startled by the figure of a man, perfectly nude, standing on a spur of rock which jutted out over the seething river below. His matted hair was bound up on the crown of his head, and he stood perfectly erect and still, with his clasped hands stretched towards the stars, while he seemed to be gazing intently into the distant heavens. A flickering camp-fire under a tree behind him threw its light upon his form, so as to give him a strange ghost-like appearance, and for the moment I was quite startled by the seeming spectre. I watched him a short time, but he did not move, and he probably remained there long after I had fallen asleep."

I have heard of another case of a Hindu fakir, who would persist in going about the city of Lucknow, "sun-clad," at all hours of the day, to the vexation of many of the inhabitants. The holy man was again and again arrested, and taken before the English magistrate, and warned that he would be punished if he persisted in defying the laws of public decency. The stupid fellow, however, refused to mend his ways, and was finally imprisoned, and ordered to receive ten stripes. When set at liberty he was presented with a waist-cloth, and told that he must beware of offending again.

The news of the punishment of the saintly fakir spread like wildfire throughout the city, and greatly displeased some of the people, who thought that the magistrate had gone too far. Others were delighted,

however, that the *yogi* had been taught a lesson, more especially as the flogging had frightened him, and cured him of his offence. The saint was greatly chaffed as he went through the streets with his brand-new clothing on; and when asked how it was such a holy man as he had been subjected to such indignities, he gave the following explanation of events, which was ingenious if not convincing. He said, "In my former birth I was a washerman, and the magistrate was my donkey. I used to treat him abominably. I would load him up with heavy bundles till his legs were bending under him, then sit on the top and whip him up. In this life things have changed. I have been born a poor fakir, and he a magistrate, that he may pay me back in my own coin the injury I did him." Thus the troublesome but good-humoured mendicant, in true Eastern fashion, sought to turn the laugh against the Englishman.

The person to whom Bishop Thoburn referred as standing naked and alone on a spur of rock in the Himalayan mountains was a typical Hindu saintly character of the best sort. The idea of such is that a man should withdraw himself from the world, and in absolute quiet concentrate his thoughts on God alone. And in Western lands we have the same idea as illustrated by the actions of monks and nuns, who have retired to desert places, or to monasteries or nunneries. The idea is not, however, Scriptural; for the Bible teaches us that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." We cannot but regard with feelings of respectful pity the misguided

people who truly believe that God is pleased with their voluntary severance from their fellows, and the endurance of many hardships, including the infliction of austerities upon their bodies.

Very remarkable things are related of Indian fakirs in the matter of austerities. Some will hang themselves up by the feet head downwards, and remain in that position for a long time ; others will take a vow of silence for five or ten or twenty years ; others will make long pilgrimages to various shrines, painfully "measuring their length" on the ground all the way ; others will hold up the right hand over the head until it has become stiff and fixed ; others will clench the hand till the nails grow through the palm ; others will sit between four fires with the blazing sun overhead, or stand up to the neck in water for hours ; and others will walk round a temple yard wearing shoes studded inside with sharp nails. In short, there seems to be no folly or personal cruelty for the sake of obtaining renown and merit that fakirs will not commit or undergo.

In proof of the foregoing statements let me give an instance or two that I have myself witnessed, and a few illustrative stories that I have heard or read. At the Temple of Kalighat near Calcutta, I often saw more than one mendicant with feet twisted under the body and with hand uplifted as in the engraving on p. 46. The arm had become paralysed with disuse. Then one year when I was visiting Allahabad I remember seeing an aged man lying on a clay table or bed on the bank of the river Jamna, with only a single sheet over him to protect him from the scorching sun.

*This fakir was quite ready to speak when spoken to, and, though very feeble, was very cheerful. He stated that he was over ninety years of age, and had been sixty years in the same place, never moving except to go down at midnight to bathe in the spot where the Ganges and the Jamna meet, which is considered specially sacred.*

I noticed that the old man's face was deeply pitted with small-pox ; and on being questioned on this point, he said that God had smitten him with disease when twenty years of age, and that he was not only severely marked but had lost his sight. Lifting up his sightless orbs the fakir presented a sad appearance, and my heart went out to him in sympathy. When asked if the austerities of his life, exposed as he was to the heat by day and the cold by night, and to all the changes of the seasons, did not distress him and dishearten him at times, he answered, " Oh no, I am perfectly happy ! I spend my time in thinking of the gods, and I never get tired of thinking of those great beings."

His next remark startled me considerably, for it was to the effect that he was without sin, and, in fact, had never sinned. Some neighbours I talked with afterwards about the old man told a different tale, however. Their statement was that in his early days the fakir had lived a wild life ; but by his austerities, and especially by his bathing in the confluence of the sacred rivers, his guilt had all been washed away, and he was now an example of holiness to the whole world. This famous saint has recently, I believe, passed from time into eternity.



Mr. Bholanath Chunder, in his book entitled "The Travels of a Hindu," speaks of a certain fakir named Mahapurush of Kidderpore, who was evidently a



A FAKIR, BOMBAY.

curious character.

Let me quote the passage, which runs: "This saint was apparently a man about forty years of age, with a very fair complexion, and jet-black hair. He did not eat or drink anything, nor speak a word, but remained in a sitting posture with his legs and thighs crossed, absorbed in meditation. His fasting, strange to say, did not appear to tell upon his health. To awake him from his meditations smelling-salt had been held

to his nose, hot brands had been applied to his body, he had been kept sunk in the river for hours; but nothing awoke him from his reveries, or made him utter a word. Both Europeans and natives flocked to see him,

and went away wondering at the curious man. At last milk was forced down his throat and more substantial food, when the cravings of his senses were gradually awakened ; but he died in a few days of dysentery."

Bishop Heber also, in his famous "Diary," has much to say about strange cases of austerity amongst fakirs. Let me give one instance. It is taken from the second volume, and is as follows :---"As I passed through the principal street of Khanwah in my evening's walk, I saw a very young man naked and covered with chalk and ashes, his hair wreathed with withered leaves and flowers, working with his hands and a small trowel in a hole about big enough to hide him if he stooped down. I asked him if he were sinking a well ; but a bystander told me that he was a Mussulman fakir from the celebrated shrine near Ajmere, that this was his dwelling, and that he used to make a fire at the bottom and cower over it. They called this a suttee, but explained themselves to mean that he would not actually kill, but only roast himself by way of penance. I attempted as far as I could to reason with him, but obtained no answer except a sort of faint smile. His countenance was pretty strongly marked by insanity. I gave him a few pice, which he received in silence, and laid down on a stone, then touched his forehead respectfully, and resumed his work, scraping with his hands like a mole."

In January 1812 the celebrated missionary, the Rev. W. Ward, witnessed what he described as "uncommonly severe acts of religious austerity," on the part of fakirs in the suburbs of Calcutta. It seems that a number of these saints surrounded themselves

daily with scorching fires, and for three or four hours rested, in front of the flames, on their shoulders with their legs in the air, repeating the names of their gods, and counting their beads. Crowds of people assembled to witness the strange proceedings of the infatuated men, who continued their ansterities in the night by standing up to their necks in the Ganges for two or three hours, counting their beads.

In his well-known book on "The Hindus," Mr. Ward tells of a visit he paid to Sangar Island, a celebrated place of pilgrimage at the mouth of the Ganges. "At the temple of Kapila there," he says, "we found two mendicants from the Upper Provinces, one of them a young man, who had held up his left arm till it was become stiff. They were both covered with ashes; their hair clotted with dirt and tied in a bunch at the top of the head, and were without any covering except the bark of some tree and a shred of cloth drawn up betwixt their legs. At a distance they could scarcely be distinguished as men, and it appeared almost impossible for human beings to manifest a greater disregard of the body.

"We asked the young man how long he had held up his arm in this manner? He said, 'For three years.' To the question whether it produced any pain, he replied, that as far as his body was concerned it did so for the first six months. The nails of this hand were grown long like the claws of a bird of prey. In his hut we saw two bead-rolls made of the stalk of the basil, a deer's skin, the horns of a deer, some embers, and a piece of sacking. When asked why he embraced this manner of life, the young fakir's reply



YOGIS (HINDU RELIGIOUS FANATICS).



implied an indifference to future rewards. He seemed scarcely willing to confess that he had any connections, father or mother, and reluctantly mentioned the place of his birth. Respecting his food he manifested the same indifference, though we discovered in one of the temples a large quantity of corn, clarified butter, and spices.

“The other fakir was less communicative but more intent on his devotions : he had a separate hut, and as though all desire of human society and friendship was extinguished, these persons, the only human beings in the district, seemed to have no connection with each other. At a distance from the temple we saw a wild hog, and on the sand in several places fresh marks of the feet of a large tiger. The young man informed us, with perfect indifference, that during the three preceding months six persons had been taken away by tigers ; and added, in the same tone, that the human body was the natural food of the tiger, and that such a death was no mark of the divine displeasure. We asked him whether he did not think it a fortunate circumstance that while so many of his companions had been devoured by tigers he was spared. However, he did not appear to feel this sentiment, but said that the tigers would eventually take him also.”

Mr. Ward's reference to tigers eating fakirs brings to my mind a passage I read in a book I was studying when preparing the chapter in the previous volume on “Snakes and Snake Worship.” Dr. Vincent Richards, in his “Landmarks of Snake Poison Literature,” writes : “It appears that before the woodcutters will go into a fresh patch of jungle in the Soonderbunds they

*send a holy man, a Hindu, to the place to propitiate the wild animals. He erects a small hut in which he stops for the night, if he is not eaten in the meantime. If all goes well and the yogi is untouched it is assumed that the jungle may be safely worked. Occasionally it happens that a hungry brute refuses to be propitiated in any way but in a natural manner, and eats a yogi. When the woodcutters are asked to explain why the holy man has been eaten, notwithstanding his mantras or charms, they say that he must either have had a very indifferent character, which was probably true, or he had forgotten his mantras when attacked by the tiger."*

There have been cases known of fakirs taming tigers and keeping them as companions in their loneliness in desert places. When Bishop Heber was in Upper India in the neighbourhood of Tighri, which is surrounded by a deep jungle, he was told there were many wild animals, such as hogs and deer, in the district. He then asked if there were any tigers, and was answered in the affirmative. His informer then went on to say that there was a very wonderful thing in the neighbourhood, for they had two holy men who lived where the tigers most abounded, and yet neither of them was ever molested by the animals, while one of them actually every night had a visit from a tiger, which licked his hands and fondled him for hours.

The good Bishop, interested in this tale, made further enquiries about it, and was told that the fakir was a very old man, with a long white beard and grey hair, and that his dwelling was a little hut among the long grass, not far from the roadside, and that there were people who had been there at night, and seen the holy

man and the tiger together. The Bishop came to the conclusion that the story was a true one ; for he says in his "Diary," "It certainly is not unlikely that a man with no other occupation or amusement might very thoroughly tame a tiger's whelp so as to retain a hold on its affections, and to restrain it while in his presence from hurting others, even after it had arrived at its full growth and fierceness."

Fakirs differ very greatly in their characters and ways of life. Not all are of the meditative, austere, or self-denying temperament. The majority it is considered are mere loafers, who travel about from place to place simply to take life easily by living upon the bounteous alms of the people, who are usually very ready to give to the so-called saints, that they may obtain their blessing and the merit which is believed to accrue from almsgiving. As well as being beggars, it is thought that many of these fakirs are thieves and robbers and worse.

The poor people of India have a great dread of these vicious fakirs, and render them assistance even more from fear than from love. Coopooswamey, in his account of "Everyday Life in South India," says, in his chapter on Pilgrimages, that as he and a party of friends were driving past a country market-place, his aunt called out, "'See those impudent fakirs, how they snatch and take by force what they want from the baskets of the poor women!' We looked out and saw an ugly, dirty, half-naked beggar, his face, breast and arms smeared with ashes ; his long hair all matted, and tied in a knot above his head ; his wallets slung on his shoulder, and an oval



hanging from her neck. Another picturesque saint was leading a very handsome white bull, similarly adorned with brass bells, coloured cloth, and gay worsted tassels ; but in addition to his crown of peacocks' feathers, a yak's tail was so arranged above the hump on his shoulders as to form a waving plume." The people, touched with the devotion of the fakirs to their sacred animals, supply the former lavishly with what they want—viz., money.

At different periods of Indian history, fakirs, who are always a public nuisance, have caused serious trouble in the State. In the days of the Emperor Arungzebe a vast host of these mischievous vagabonds formed themselves into an army, and attacked and defeated the Imperial troops, and made the Great Moghul tremble on his throne. Ultimately they were put down, however, with a strong hand. Then, in the days of Warren Hastings, the English had a terrible struggle with certain fakirs who, coming from the fastnesses of the Himalayas, and banding themselves together in companies of two or three thousand, swept like a torrent through Bengal, burning, destroying the villages, and committing unnumbered horrors wherever they went. Five battalions of troops were sent against them, but failed to put them down. Then the Governor-General took the field in person against them, but he fared very little better than his generals ; for the fakirs evaded the troops, and went on with their plundering and murdering until they had gathered together an enormous booty, when they as quickly departed as they had come, and disbanded themselves, much to the relief of the East India Company.

Nowadays, though occasionally fakirs may be found in bands of five hundred strong in certain parts of the country, they content themselves with begging, or at the worst with surreptitiously appropriating the goods of the people through whose towns or villages they pass. The British Government rules with too strong a hand for the saints to dare to proceed to open violence, however much they might like to.

Strange to say, India has known women fakirs as well as men, though there are comparatively few of the former now. A native writer says, "It is now rare to see a woman who has renounced all pleasures, all property, all society, and all domestic affections, pass from city to city with a vermilion spot on her forehead, a cloth of dull orange on her body, a long trident in one hand, and a hollow gourd in the other. Hindu female ambition is not exercised now to distinguish itself by a public life of abstinence, but by the qualities which fit a woman to be the companion of man." Let us hope that it will always be so.

It is in vain we try to find out how many fakirs there are at the present time in India. An immense number, there can be no doubt. Some estimate that there are probably a million or more of them. What an encumbrance such a host of non-workers, of beggars, must be on the land! The public opinion of India needs educating on the subject. The people need to be shown the evil of promiscuous, thoughtless almsgiving, and how sinful it is to encourage any class of men in idleness who are well able to earn their own living.

The Gospel of Christ is needed in India, as well for the bodies as the souls of the people, as well for their

material as their spiritual welfare, for the Gospel teaches us that true saintliness lies in holy living, in active living, in self-denying living, for the good of others ; and that if a man will not work neither shall he eat. The Gospel teaches us that health, prosperity and happiness come not through a life of ease and idleness, but through faithfully and diligently serving our generation according to the will of God.



ASCETIC AT THE TEMPLE OF KALI, CALCUTTA.



SACRED BULL MYSORE.

### III.

#### *SACRED COWS AND BULLS.*

**T**HE bull is the most sacred animal of Hindu mythology. He is called Nahadeo, the little god. The Hindus say that when Brahma created the sacred caste of the Brahmins, he at the same time created the cow to afford sustenance by its milk to man, and to supply clarified butter for the burnt offerings which man should present to his creator. The cow is called, moreover, the 'mother of the gods.

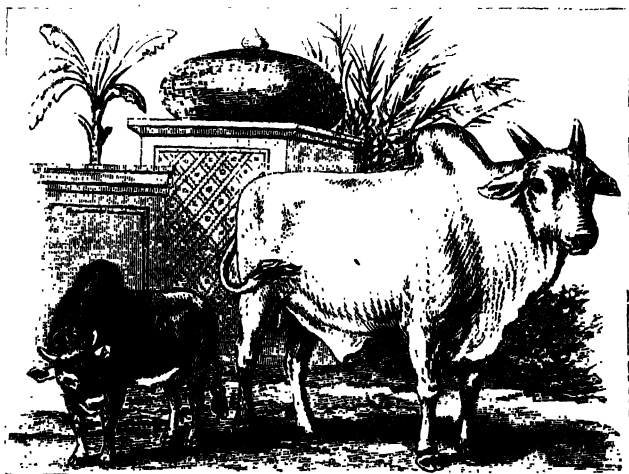
So sacred have cows and bulls become in the eyes of Hindus that they consider their slaughter a greater crime than parricide, and years ago this offence

against the sacred animals was punished by death. No orthodox Hindu will eat beef at the present day, and he imagines that never in the history of his race was such an unholy thing done. However, facts are against such a supposition, as has been clearly shown by various writers, and notably by Dr. Rajandralala Mitra, a learned Bengali.

This writer, in his book entitled "Indo-Aryans," has a long and interesting chapter on "Beef in Ancient India." Let me just quote the opening words of the chapter, which run :—"The idea of beef as an article of food is so shocking to the Hindus that thousands over thousands of the more orthodox among them never repeat the counterpart of the word in their vernaculars, and many and dire have been the sanguinary conflicts which the shedding of the blood of cows has caused in this country. And yet it would seem that there was a time when not only no compunctious visitings of conscience had a place in the mind of the people in slaughtering cattle, when not only the meat of that animal was actually esteemed a valuable article of diet, when not only was it a mark of generous hospitality as amongst the ancient Jews to kill 'the fatted calf' in honour of respected guests, but when a supply of beef was deemed an absolute necessity by pious Hindus in their journey from this to another world, and a cow was invariably killed to be burnt with the dead."

Dr. Mitra supports these statements by copious quotations from ancient Hindu writings, and puts the matter so clearly and forcibly that one would think even the most bigoted would be obliged to confess

that the killing of cows and bulls, whatever it may be considered now in India, was not at one time regarded as a crime. However, superstitions die hard in the East, and Dr. Mitra has failed to convince his countrymen as a whole of the error of their ways; for almost universally the belief is still tenaciously held, that it is now, and always has been, an unpardonable sin to



BRAHMAN BULL AND ZEBU.

slay for any purpose one of the most sacred of animals.

Many explanations have been given of the introduction of this curious belief into India. Dr. Mitra thinks that it was the general teaching of the Buddhists shortly before the birth of Christ, on the sacredness of all life, that first led the Hindus to give up their beef-eating tastes, and make cows and bulls sacred animals, and their destruction a crime. This

may be the true explanation of the custom ; but I incline to another which I have heard propounded by thoughtful students of the question.

I have heard it stated that the frequency of terrible famines in India was the real origin of the veto that was put upon taking the lives of cows and bulls. It is said that the wisest of the forefathers of the Hindus, afraid that in times of famine the starving people would eat all their cattle, and thus leave themselves absolutely without those useful animals of produce and labour, saw no way to prevent the disaster except by investing the valuable animals with a religious character, and treating their destruction as an impious, sacrilegious act. So the command went forth from the priests that thenceforth the life of a cow or a bull was equally as precious as, or more precious, in the eyes of the gods than the life of a human being.

However, be the explanation what it may, it is certain that for hundreds if not thousands of years the Hindus have regarded their cattle with great reverence, and have treated as blasphemous the mere suggestion that a cow or a bull should be killed for any purpose whatever, save now and again to be offered in sacrifice to such bloodthirsty goddesses as Bhowani and Kali, whose divinity might excuse the otherwise monstrous and unpardonable deed.

Not only are cows and bulls held in great reverence in India, but they are actually worshipped as gods. Especially at one season of the year, on what is supposed to be the anniversary of the creation of the first cow, the worship of the sacred animal is very general. No image is used, but the worship is per-

formed in the cowhouse before a jar of water. At another season of the year the milkmen paint the horns and hoofs of their cattle yellow, and bathe them in the river, after which they do *pooja* to them—that is, worship them. Persons strict in their religion actually worship the sacred animal every morning immediately after performing their own religious ablutions. The form of worship is to throw flowers at the feet of the cow, and feed her with fresh grass, all the time saying, “O Bhuguvutee! eat! eat!” Then the worshippers solemnly walk round the animal three or seven times, and make obeisance to her.

The Rev. S. Mateer, in his valuable work entitled “Native Life in Travancore,” gives some interesting information about cows and their worship by royal personages. He says: “The worship of cows, especially at the time of death, is a favourite one with the Hindus. Baka Bhai, widow of the last Rajah of Nagpore, spent twelve hours daily in the adoration of cows, the *tulsi* plant, the sun, and her idols. When her end was at hand, five cows were introduced into the room where she lay, in order to be bestowed on Brahmins. The gift of the animal was accompanied by a further donation in money, and as one after another the cows passed onward from the bedside, they were supposed to help the dying woman forward on her way to heaven. Among the last acts of her life, was to call for a cow, and having fallen at its feet, as far as her now fast waning strength would allow her, she offered it grass to eat, and addressed it by the venerated name of mother.”

It is generally understood that the Maharajahs of



Travancore, though renowned princes who have descended from an ancient line, are yet originally, and therefore still, in the matter of caste, Sudras ; that is, members of the lowest caste. However, that the reigning princes may have due honour and respect paid them even from the people of every caste in their dominions, the priests, Mr. Mateer says, have instituted a curious custom in association with a golden cow, into the body of which each Maharajah must enter, as soon as possible after his accession to the throne, and when the ceremony has been performed the prince is regarded as "born again."

This curious ceremony is as follows :—"The golden cow is partly filled with holy water, to which are added the five products of the cow ; and into this His Highness enters, after many preliminary observances, and remains a few minutes. When he comes out again he is recognised by the people as 'the prince born of the cow,' and is regarded as highly elevated in caste, sanctity and honour, fully consecrated and crowned and authorised to reign over his people. He can no longer partake of food along with the members of his own family, who remain in their former status, and he may have the honour of being present at the meals of Brahmins." The golden cow, when broken up, becomes the magnificent perquisite of the priests.

What a contemptible affair the whole thing is ! Just think of a well-educated prince like the Maharajah of Travancore submitting to such nonsense ! How can any intelligent man think that the mere act of passing through the body of a golden cow can make one iota of difference to his sanctity or greatness !

Mr. Mateer is certainly justified in describing the prince as “a strange mixture of Western civilisation and Hindu superstition,” and we can heartily join in his prayer—“May the true enlightenment of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the spiritual regeneration of God’s Holy Spirit, speedily save and bless the princes and nobles of Travancore !”



TODAS.

In the South of India in the Neilgherry Hills there lives a tribe of aborigines called Todas. The most striking peculiarity of this very peculiar people is, the absorbing importance they attach to all duties connected with the management of the cow and her chief product, milk. Travellers say that so closely are Todas and cows associated that it is simply impossible to think of one without the other. The Todas are exceedingly kind to their cows, and treat

them as really and truly sacred animals, scarcely touching them with light wands when they wish to guide them, and calling them by pet names which the animals seem to understand and obey with intelligence.

The Todas have one cow in each herd of cattle which they regard with special veneration. It is called the bell-cow, because of a certain bell-idol or bell-god, which is given to it. These bell-cows are not selected on account of their good milking qualities, their size, or beauty, but are the descendants in direct female line from certain originals whose early history has been lost. Colonel W. E. Marshall, in his book entitled "Travels amongst the Todas," says that a priest told him that no matter how old and worthless the bell-cow might become, the bell-idol belonged to her till she died, when without fail it was transferred to her daughter. Strange to say, the bell-god is not worn by the bell-cow except for a few days, but is kept in the priest's house, though it is clearly understood to which cow it belongs.

The same priest gave Colonel Marshall a short account of the installation of a new bell-cow. "Twice a day, morning and evening, for three successive days, the priest waves the bell, with his right hand, round and round the head of the bovine heiress, talking to her the while much as follows :

"What a fine cow your predecessor was !  
How well she supported us with her milk !  
Won't you supply us in like manner ?  
You are a god amongst us !  
Let all be well !  
Let us have plenty of calves !  
Let us have plenty of milk !' "

So taken up are the Todas, both young and old, with their cows, that they think of little else, talk of little else, and care for little else. The tendance of cows, and the worship of cows, have become a perfect passion with them. •“Sitting apparently thinking of nothing at all, a man will pick up a bit of cane or forked twig from the ground, and, like the typical Yankee who is supposed to whittle a stick while he speculates, so the Toda will employ himself for an hour at a time, splitting his bit of cane or rounding the little branches of his twig into the likeness of cows’ horns, as he muses. Even children may be seen coming in from cattle driving, with strings of these small horns over their arms.”

The great usefulness of cows is recognised all over India, and has doubtless something to do with the reverence in which these animals are held. It is quite surprising to learn in how many ways the products of the cow are used in India. To illustrate this point I do not think I could do better than quote a passage from a pleasant story written by a native Christian of India, the Rev. Lal Behari Day. The book is entitled “Bengal Peasant Life.”

In the chapter on “Household Matters” three Hindu women are brought on the scene, named respectively, Alanga, Sundari, and Aduri, and we are told something about how they spend their mornings in household work. “When the women got out of their beds, which they did always at crow-cawing—I cannot say cock-crowing, for there was no cock, not only in the house, but hardly in the village, as cocks and hens are an abomination to Hindus—they went

to the side of the tank near the house. There they made a solution of cow-dung and water, and sprinkled the liquid by the hand on the open yard, which was next swept by a broom made of the stalks of palm-trees.

“ But the rooms and verandahs require to be cleansed and washed in another fashion. As the flooring was entirely of earth, there being not a single brick or stone in the house, or a plank of wood either, every inch of the floor of every room was besmeared by means of a piece of rag, with the said solution of cow-dung and water, and allowed to dry itself. The reader may think that this is a dirty business, and that the rooms must be the worse for being thus besmeared. But he is mistaken. He may take our word that the floor greatly improves by the process. It becomes smooth and glossy, and no cracks are visible. And as for any disagreeable smell, there is nothing of the sort—the smell, if any, being positively pleasant. Hindu peasants besmear their cottages with a solution of cow-dung and water, because cow-dung is regarded ceremonially as a purifier. It is, however, a question why Hindu law-givers should have pitched upon cow-dung as a purifier. Has it any sanitary value? Has it any disinfecting property? From the universal practice of the Hindus of Bengal I should be inclined to think that cow-dung was a disinfectant; but I prefer to leave the matter in the hands of doctors and chemists.

“ But the women have not yet done with cow-dung. There is a large heap of it lying in a corner of the yard, partly obtained from the cow-house, and partly

collected the previous day by Gayarani, whose business is not only to tend the cows but to collect whatever cow-dung he may find in the fields, either from his own cows, or from those of other people, and a



ZEBU CARRIAGE.

basketful of which valuable substance he every evening brings home on his head.

“Towards this heap of dung, Alanga, Sundari, and Aduri proceeded. They put a little water on it,

kneaded it as a baker kneads his dough ; and each went with a basketful to the sunny sides of the walls of their huts, and covered them with cakes made by the palms of their hands. These cow-dung cakes, when they become dry, are of great use ; they are the only fuel of the family. From year's end to year's end the people do not buy firewood ; for cooking, and for keeping a fire in the cow-house, they use no other fuel than what is afforded by the cow."

Thus we see to the Bengal peasant the cow is the most useful of all animals as well as the most sacred. Mr. Day, in summing up the advantages of this quadruped, says : " The cow supplies the newly-born infant with food for some years ; the cow, or rather the bull, tills the ground on which the raiyots' food grows ; the cow brings home on its back that food when it is ready from the fields ; the cow furnishes the peasant-family with the only fuel they have ; the cow provides the peasant with curds, sour milk and whey ; and the cow gives that *ghi* or clarified butter which is so grateful to the palate and nostrils of Hindu gods and Bengali Babus. After this, is it to be wondered at that the cow should be greatly respected by the Hindus ? " The pity is, however, that gratitude should degenerate into worship !

In the Mahabharata, the great epic poem of India, there is a story told of a most wonderful cow, called Nandini. As the Hindus believe the tale and hold the memory of Nandini in very special regard, I will relate the extraordinary incidents of her career. It is said that Nandini, cow though she was, could talk and reason and work all kinds of miracles. She was

the property of a famous rishi or saint, named Vashishta, who lived in a dense forest far from the dwellings of men. Now to the abode of this venerable saint, there came one day a king and his suite, who had been out hunting deer and wild boar in the forest, and had got lost, and who, when they were almost ready to sink with exhaustion, espied the dwelling place of the poor fakir. The good old man received his unexpected guests with deep salutations, offered them water to wash their feet, and bade them welcome to his humble home.

But where was food to be obtained for such a company? The saint appealed in his perplexity to his wonder-working cow, who had never yet failed him in the hour of need. And, according to the story,

“The Cow, from whom all plenty flows,  
Obedient to her saintly lord,  
Viands to suit each taste outpoured.  
Honey she gave, and roasted grain  
Made sweet with flowers and sugar-cane.  
Each beverage of flavour rare,  
And food of every sort, were there ;  
Hills of hot rice, and sweetened cakes,  
And curdled milk, and soup in lakes.  
Vast beakers flowing to the brim  
With sugared drink prepared for him ;  
With dainty sweetmeats, deftly made,  
Before the hermit's guests were laid.”

We can quite understand that the king and his courtiers were filled with astonishment at the marvellous deeds of the saint's cow. Indeed, nothing would satisfy the king but the possession of the valuable animal, so he proposed to buy it from the



fakir, offering him ten thousand ordinary cows in exchange for it. The saint quietly answered "No!" But the king still pressed the matter, saying, "If nothing less will satisfy thee, take my kingdom in exchange for thy cow." But the holy man replied that he did not want a kingdom, but desired merely to be left in peace with his beloved animal, Naudini.

Thereupon the monarch waxed wroth, and in his anger repaid the saint's hospitality with unkingly threats, and ended by declaring, "I will take thy cow even by force." The rishi, being of a peaceful disposition, said simply, "As thou wilt, O king." It was one thing, however, to talk of taking away Naudini, and another thing to do it; for the faithful cow was not disposed to leave her master, and when the attendants of the king laid violent hands upon her to drag her away, she showed them what mettle she was of.

Breaking from her captors the fair Naudini raised her head and neck high in the air, and became terrible to behold. Then she ran at the king and his suite, and scattered them right and left. And when they attacked her with their whips, her eyes became red with anger, and her whole person, as the Hindu historian says, became "like unto the sun in his mid-day glory." Then the enraged animal turned on her tormentors again; and from her tail, which she lashed in fury, there came forth showers of burning coals which effectually put the strangers to rout. The whole band except the king fled ignominiously, and left Naudini master of the field. Thereupon the king was so surprised with the valour as well as other

virtues of the cow that he declared there was none like her in the universe, and that she and all her kind ought to receive the homage and worship of mankind throughout all ages. The king, the story adds, gave up his kingdom, remained in the forest, and became a fakir or saint like the master of Nandini.

A striking peculiarity of the cows, bulls and bullocks of India, is a great fleshy hump between the shoulders, a part of the animal which obtains great favour with Europeans in the East, as it is a close-grained and very delicate meat. This hump seems to be a providential arrangement, like the hump of the camel, and acts as a reservoir of food ; for in times of famine it has been noticed to shrivel up slowly before the rest of the body showed any signs of emaciation or suffering.

As cattle are very generally used in India as beasts of burden, a yoke laid across the necks of a pair of bullocks is kept in place by their humps. The drawback to this arrangement, however, is that as the poor animals pull by the hump, and not as in other countries by the head, the hump is often terribly galled. The Hindus, notwithstanding their religious regard and veneration for their cattle, cannot be said to treat them very kindly. Though they consider it a sin to kill sacred cows or bulls, they do not hesitate a moment to overload them or to work them to death.

Miss Cumming, in her book on India, speaks of the cruel overloading of cattle which she saw in the hill station of Simla. She writes : " One poor bullock sank exhausted near our windows, and was of course left to die. We would fain have had it shot, but no

one dared touch the poor sacred creature. All we could do was to carry water to it in a brass basin ; but it was too ill to drink. Next morning it died, and the first passer-by threw its carcase down the Khud. Meanwhile eagles, kites and vultures had assembled in a great body on the hill above us. We watched them perched in a row, expectant, till apparently one gave a signal, whereupon all swooped down simultaneously. In ten minutes only the carcase remained, picked quite clean, and the bones were finally polished by swarms of ants." Thus, as a rule, fare the sacred cattle of India—they are literally worked to death.

But though the majority of the cows and bulls of the East are treated as beasts of burden, and have hard times of it, a few fare better, owing to a singular custom of letting loose on special occasions, usually on the death of a worshipper of Siva, one or two of the sacred animals, which are given up by their owners, and allowed to roam for life about the country according to their own sweet will. It is believed that in some way the setting free of a bull on earth secures the happiness of the dead in heaven.

Bishop Heber refers to this remarkable custom in his "Diary." He writes : " A very handsome and sleek young bull, branded with the emblem of Siva on his haunches, was grazing in the green paddy. He crossed our path quite tame and fearless, and, seeing some grass in Stowe's hand, coolly walked up to smell at it. These bulls are turned out when calves by wealthy Hindus on solemn occasions, as an acceptable offering to Siva. It would be a mortal sin to strike or injure them. They feed where they choose, and devout

persons take great delight in pampering them. They are exceeding pests in villages near Calcutta, breaking into the gardens, thrusting their noses into the stalls of fruiterers' and pastrycooks' shops, and helping themselves without ceremony. • Like other petted animals they are sometimes mischievous, and are said to resent with a push of their horns any delay in gratifying their wishes."

I remember when in Benares seeing numbers of these favoured animals, for they are as plentiful in the North-west as in Bengal. Indeed, all over India they are to be found ; and their numbers have become so excessive, and their depredations so great, that the municipal authorities have begun to take measures to suppress them as a public nuisance. In some places these sacred animals, or Brahmini Bulls, may now be seen yoked in conservancy carts removing the city refuse, or drawing water to irrigate the public gardens. Owners may not like the new state of things, but they can take no steps to prevent this wise use of strong animals. By dedicating them to a god their right in them has been transferred to him. Should they maintain that they are still their property, they may be called upon to pay very heavy bills for the destruction they have wrought to standing crops and flower gardens. As a result of this dilemma, the original owners are obliged to regard what they consider the desecration of the sacred cattle in silence.

Between the Moslems and the Hindus there has been a long-standing quarrel, a quarrel of centuries with regard to sacred cows and bulls. While the Hindus will not kill cattle or eat beef, the Moslems

will. On the other hand, the followers of Mohammed will not slay pigs or eat swine's flesh. The slaughter-houses of Moslems in Hindu towns and cities are a constant source of annoyance to the Hindus, and are provocative of strife. The Hindus even say that the Mohammedans are not content with killing their own cattle, but that they place a tempting bundle of grass at the slaughter-house gates at dusk, and wait till a cow or bull attacks it, when they make a rush, drive it in, close the gates, kill it, and sell it next day in open market.

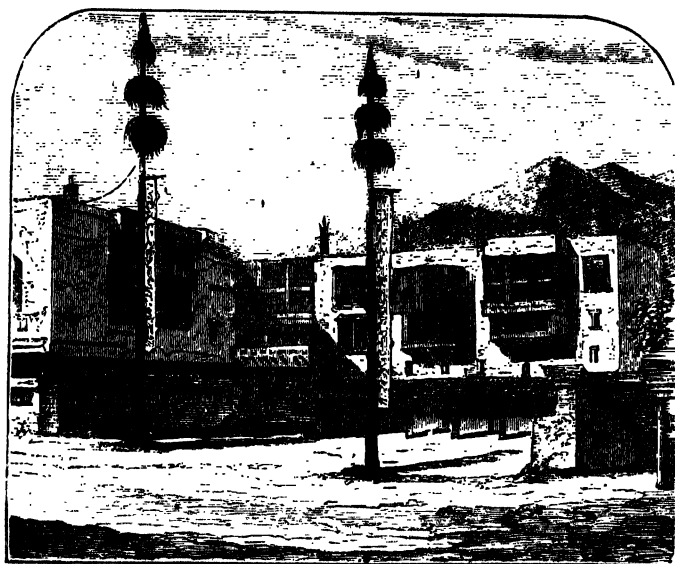
There have been many serious riots between the followers of the two religions, even of late years, on this very question, and it requires a great deal of watchfulness, at certain seasons of the year, on the part of the authorities, to keep the peace. In the past Hindus have, in times of war and victory, defiled Mohammedan mosques with the blood of slain pigs, and the Mohammedans have retaliated by killing cows, and smearing the Hindu temples with the blood of the sacred animals. And if the opportunity arose, I am afraid they would do so again. It is pitiable to think that a difference of opinion with regard to the sacred character or otherwise of certain animals should lead human beings to commit acts of violence on each other and sacrilege on their respective places of worship.

It just remains for me to say that the sacred bull of India is found in the form of statues outside the temples of Siva, it being the animal on which the god is supposed to ride when he wishes to make a journey. These carved bulls, of all sizes, can be bought from

the traffickers in sacred symbols, whose booths or stalls are in all the chief cities of the land. I have two or three carved images in my possession which I obtained in Benares.

The sacred animal is also engraved on brass lotas or water-vessels, and on many of the copper trays used for temple offerings. And the Brahmin ostentatiously telling his beads will be found to have the holy bull embroidered on the bag which contains his rosary. And I have seen paintings which represent human beings as holding on to the tail of the sacred animal, which is piloting them through the sea of sin, and across the river of death to the golden shore. Thus we see that the sacred cows and bulls of India, whether in the flesh or in the form of images, are held in the highest reverence. We have read in history of the apis or bull which the ancient Egyptians worshipped, and of the golden calf which the Israelites once worshipped for a brief season in the wilderness of Sinai. Is it not curious, and sad withal, to think that the old idolatrous custom exists to-day amongst the Hindus in the land of India?





BUDDHIST CONVENT IN TIBET.

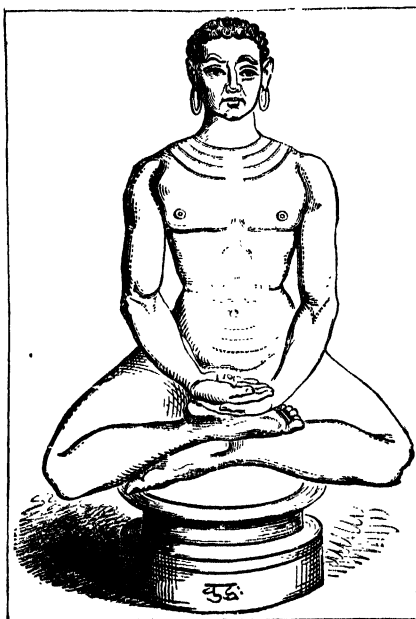
#### IV.

##### *BUDDHIST PRAYER-MACHINES.*

**O**NE of the most curious religious practices that I noticed in India was that of using prayer-machines, or, to speak more correctly, praise-machines, for Buddhist prayers nearly always take the form of ascriptions of praise to the founder of their creed, the noble-minded Prince Gautama, also called Buddha or the Enlightened One.

Buddha is believed to have been born about 600 B.C. of the royal house of Kapilavastu, a country in Northern India. His father designed him to be a

great warrior and conqueror, as his ancestors had been before him, but the young prince shunned all warlike pursuits; and even the rough sports of his companions, and preferred to study religious books, and to meditate on the grave and solemn aspects of human life. The



STATUE OF BUDDHA.

king, disappointed with these peaceful and retiring habits of his son, sought to win him to more worldly things, and a more practical career, by marrying him to a beautiful and talented princess. For a time it seemed as if this scheme would answer; for Gautama took his charming bride into the brightest society of



the gay court, and gave himself up to a season of pleasure, and sought in the delights of the world to banish from his mind the puzzling questions of the inner meanings of human life, which had so greatly exercised and distressed his spirit for some years.

However, the strong cravings of the soul of the young prince triumphed over the merely surface joys of society life ; and one day, after his feelings had been deeply stirred by the sorrowful sight of old age, disease, and death, he resolved to leave his wife and child, his father and friends, and all the honours of his princely state, and go out into the wide world to seek for knowledge of human life, and to unravel, if he could, the mystery of human existence.

This resolution of the abandonment of earthly pomp and power and of loved friends, was carried into effect one dark and gloomy night, and Gautama found himself on the road outside the royal city of his forefathers a homeless beggar. The Buddhists call this remarkable deed of self-sacrifice, "The Great Renunciation." Gautama, after travelling some distance from home, made friends with two Hindu fakirs in the Patna district, who taught him that the path to knowledge and tranquillity of soul lies in the subjection of the flesh.

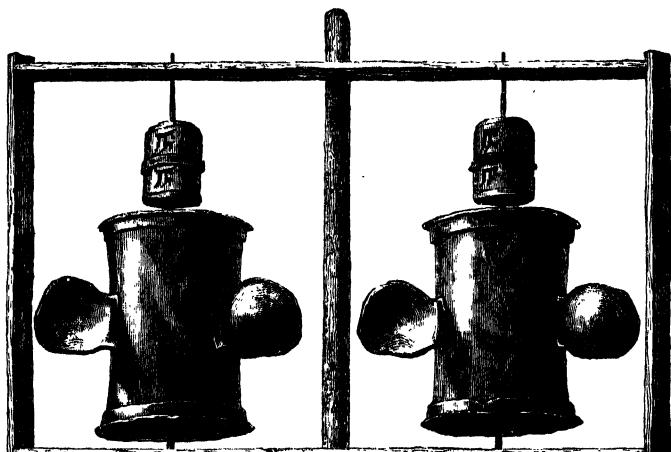
So the prince became a fakir, and, retiring into a desert place called Gaya, he practised all kinds of cruel austerities on his person in a mountain cave. Five strangers are said to have joined him, who in time became his disciples and imitated all his fastings and scourgings. For six years this painful life of austerities continued ; but Gautama became no happier

in mind, nor more contented in spirit. Torn with doubts and fears as to whether, after all his sacrifices and self-torture, he was not missing the secret of life, his physical strength gave way, and he fell in a swoon to the earth. When he again awoke to consciousness he found a great change had taken place in his feelings and convictions, and he felt that the path of salvation lay not in fastings and other penances, but simply in living a holy life.

Full of this new conviction Gautama made it known to his five disciples, who, however, were grieved and vexed with him for his change of views, and retired from him in disgust. Thus once more the prince was left alone, and the Buddhists then say that he had a fearful struggle with Maya, the spirit of evil, while meditating under a Bo-Tree at Gaya, in which he came off conqueror, and earned for himself the name by which he is known now to the whole world—viz., Buddha the enlightened, the wise, the one whose eyes had been opened to eternal things.

Two months after the “new birth” at Gaya, Buddha began his public ministry at Saranath, or the Deer Forest, near Benares. His words were addressed both to the rich and the poor, to the learned and the unlearned, and were received by many as a divine revelation. As the inspired man spoke of holiness and righteousness, of self-control and self-denial, the common people at any rate heard him gladly, and he speedily gathered around him a band of devoted followers. When he had sixty disciples, many of whom were women, he started on a missionary tour throughout Northern India, urging his countrymen to

forsake idolatry, to give up the selfish customs of caste, and to live pure and saintly lives. It is pleasing to learn that his five early friends the fakirs, who had forsaken him at Gaya, returned penitently to his side, and became his most enthusiastic and devoted adherents ; and it is still more pleasing to find that



BUDDHIST PRAYER-MACHINE.

eventually his father, his wife, his son, and all the members of his princely family, became converts to the new faith, called Buddhism.

Buddha lived to a good old age, and to the very last was a preacher of righteousness to the people of India. His parting words to his weeping followers

were—"Work out your salvation with diligence. Be earnest, be thoughtful, be holy. Keep steadfast; watch over your hearts. He who holds fast to the law and discipline, and faints not, he shall cross the ocean of life, and make an end of sorrow." After the death of Buddha his religion spread over Northern India, and was carried thence to other countries, such as Burmah, Ceylon, Siam, China, Japan, Thibet, Nepaul, Mongolia, and all Central Asia, right up to Siberia and Lapland, and at the present time it is the faith of five hundred millions of human beings.

The secret of Buddha's wonderful success, as Sir W. W. Hunter has said, was in the fact that he brought spiritual deliverance to the people. "He preached that salvation was equally open to all men, and that it must be earned not by propitiating imaginary deities, but by our own conduct. His doctrines thus cut away the religious basis of caste, impaired the efficiency of the sacrificial ritual, and assailed the supremacy of the Brahmins as the mediators between God and man. Buddhism taught that sin, sorrow, and deliverance, the state of man in this life, in all previous, and in all future lives, are the inevitable results of his own acts. He thus applied the inexorable law of cause and effect to the soul. What a man sows he must reap."

This teaching is good as far as it goes; but I would ask my young readers to notice that in the Buddhist religion nothing is said of God. We are not even sure that Buddha believed in or taught the existence of a personal God; and it is certain that nowhere in the sacred books of Buddhism is God referred to, as

He is in our Bible, as the great and loving Being to whom man is accountable for his deeds, who in Christ Jesus will help man to overcome his besetting sins, and who will, after life here is ended, receive redeemed man into the eternal felicity of heaven. What the Buddhists look forward to is *Nirvana*, which is believed by many to be annihilation, the blowing out, as it were, of the soul like the flame of a candle.

It is very strange that though India was the cradle of Buddhism, it is one of the few countries of the East where that religion does not now flourish. Hinduism, with its false gods and corrupt creed, proved too mighty for the godless, yet much purer, religion of Buddhism; and the followers of the latter creed were, in course of time, either forcibly converted or driven out of the country; and at the present day there are not more than a few thousand Buddhists in Hindustan, and these are to be found in the mountains on the frontiers of Nepaul and Thibet.

Darjeeling, the hill sanatorium of Bengal, a day's railway journey from Calcutta, and 7167 feet above the sea-level, is the nearest place where Buddhists can be met. More than once I visited that charming hill resort, and was delighted with the magnificent scenery of the district of mighty forests and eternal snow. But I found the people of Darjeeling—the Buddhists of the town and neighbourhood—even a more attractive study than the grand scenery; for their religious faith and manner of life were so different from those of the Hindus and Mohammedans of the plains.

And what specially attracted my notice were the curious religious symbols, or aids to worship, referred

to in the title of this chapter—viz., prayer-machines, about which I would now write. From the sketch I have given of the life and doctrines of Buddha my young readers will now be able to follow with intelligent interest what I have to say of the way or manner in which many of the Buddhists engage in the religious exercise of prayer or praise.

Strange as it may seem, it is a fact that the Buddhists of Darjeeling, of Thibet, and other places, employ what are called prayer-wheels, or cylinders, in their religious devotions. These machines are of various kinds—viz., hand-wheels, house or temple-wheels, wind-wheels, water-wheels, and another variety called prayer-flags, which are affixed to the top of high poles, in the neighbourhood of dwelling-houses, temples, or on high hills where they may be seen by all.

The use of these wheels can be traced back, so the Buddhists say, for at least one thousand four hundred years. They are believed to have originated from the notion that it is an act of merit and a cure for sin to be for ever reading or reciting portions of the sacred writings of Buddha. But as many people of the poorer classes were unable to read, it came to be considered sufficient for devotions to turn over the rolled manuscripts containing the precious sayings. This convenient substitute was found to save so much time and trouble, that the learned as well as the unlearned adopted it; and instead of reading the manuscripts which contained the writings of their great teacher, the people generally were to be seen contenting themselves with merely rolling and un-

rolling them. And even this method of honouring their teacher or prophet or lord became irksome in time, and prayer- or praise-wheels were invented, which simplified matters greatly.

A *hand prayer-wheel* is a little round box or cylinder, of either brass, copper, or silver, about three inches in length by two and a half in diameter. Ascriptions of praise to Buddha are closely written on strips of cloth or paper, and are tightly rolled round a spindle about six inches long, of which one half, which is left bare, forms the handle. The upper half of the spindle, which is covered with the cloth or paper, is enclosed in the cylinder. From the middle of the cylinder hangs a chain with a small lump of metal at the end, which, when the prayer-wheel is twirled round on a pivot, gives the necessary impetus to the little machine, so that it revolves without the slightest exertion, and goes on grinding any given number of prayers.

It is a very common thing to meet men in countries where these prayer-wheels are used, walking along the road, or going about their work, carrying and incessantly spinning round and round the pretty little playthings I have described. At Darjeeling I saw it done every day during my visit. And the men who did it thought that they were really praying to and worshipping the "Lord Buddha," though no word might move their lips, nor thought exercise their minds. It is a mechanical contrivance to save trouble, and it is expected that Buddha will take the will for the deed. I have said that inside the little prayer-wheels are strips of cloth or paper on which are



THE CALL TO WORSHIP IN A BUDDHIST MONASTERY.





written ascriptions of praise to Buddha. The same words, it may be added, appear also on the outside of the cylinder in embossed characters. Miss Gordon Cumming speaks of a prayer-wheel in her possession on which was written a short but very comprehensive prayer in Thibetan, a prayer for the six classes of living creatures according to Buddhism—viz., the souls in heaven, the evil spirits in the air, men, animals, souls in purgatory, and souls in hell.

The wheels in my possession, and wheels in general, however, contain what is known as *the six-syllabled charm*. All worship, as a rule, begins, continues and ends with the sentence, Om Mani Padmi Hom. These words are raised in embossed letters, perhaps a dozen times on the outside of the cylinder, and are closely written, perhaps many hundred times, on strips of paper inside. There is considerable diversity of opinion as to the meaning of the words Om Mani Padmi Hom. Dr. Rennie, in his "Story of the Botan War," translates the sentence, "Oh, the jewel on the lotus!" Dr. Hooker renders the words "Hail to him of the lotus and jewel!" And Miss Cumming gives the meaning of the sentence as follows: "Om, equivalent to the Hebrew Jah, the holiest and most glorious title of the Almighty; Mani, the jewel, one of Buddha's titles; Padmi, the lotus; Hom, equivalent to Amen." Accordingly, if we accept the last interpretation, which seems likely to be the true one, the people who use the prayer-wheels are addressing Buddha as "The Almighty, the Jewel on the Lotus, Amen."

And this prayer or charm is the sovereign balm for

every conceivable evil. By many no other prayer seems to be known or thought of. Om Mani Padmi Hom is repeated thousands, and tens of thousands of times, by every worshipper. Thus we can understand what our Saviour meant when He said, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking." Some of the little hand prayer-wheels are very pretty, and some are even inlaid with precious stones. There was one I saw, made of silver and inlaid with turquoise stones, which I coveted; but it was very dear, and I had to be content with two brass wheels. However, there was this consolation: the silver prayer-wheel was evidently made for sale to travellers, while the commoner brass ones were what the people had used in their daily devotions. In some parts, Buddhists have the greatest reluctance to sell even the ugliest old wheels or mills. They cling to them, one writer says, as we do to our dear old Bible.

When I bought my hand prayer-wheels, the man who sold them showed me the right way to use them. There is a right, and there is a wrong way. The right way to twirl the wheels, it seems, is sun-wise, from east to west; and if even by the merest accident they are turned the other way, the results will be very disastrous. This belief accounts in many cases for the reluctance to sell. There is not merely the charm of association, but a dread lest a careless hand should turn them against the sun, and so change the past acts of merit into positive sin.

All Buddhists are not able to buy hand prayer-wheels, cheap as the common ones are, and so for the

very poor, *house- on temple-wheels* have been instituted. These are great egg-shaped barrels, full of prayers, a cord being attached to the base of the barrel, which, on being pulled, sets the cylinder twirling like a child's whirligig. These are erected at the doors of dwelling-houses and in temples, so that those who do not possess the luxury of a hand-wheel of devotion, may not lose their chance of heaping up merit. Every man going in or out of the house or temple may set the big wheels spinning for his own benefit and that of the inmates. It is a simple contrivance, and the simple people are content with it, and the prayers of the head of a family seldom rise above the mechanical act of twirling round an old barrel a few times a day. His wife and children, as well as himself, are, he believes, benefited by such a deed. It is a sad thing to learn, is it not, that men can form such a low ideal of prayer; that human beings can conceive that the One whom they look upon as their Divine Lord, could be satisfied with His people mechanically pulling a prayer-wheel, in place of offering the conscious adoration of their lips and their hearts?

In the neighbourhood of Darjeeling there are two or three Buddhist temples which contain prayer-wheels, and these I visited. The largest was a medium-sized building, made of wood and thickly thatched, and would hold perhaps fifty people. There was a very low upper story inhabited by the lama or priest and his servants, accessible by a stone staircase at one side of the building. The main body of the temple is the room in which is kept an image of Buddha. This room is entered through a small transverse vesti-

bule, the breadth of the temple ;<sup>4</sup> and it was in this vestibule I found the prayer-wheels.

On the right hand there were ten wheels or barrels, about one foot in height, arranged in a row, and so lightly poised that when one of the attendants ran his hand along them, they were all set spinning in a moment. Another attendant began to ring a big bell to rouse Buddha from his forenoon sleep, while another set six barrels on the other side in motion, and still another began pulling a cord attached to an enormous wheel, which was the chief attraction of the temple. It was about five feet high, and three feet in diameter. Om Mani Padmi Hom was inscribed on the outer case, and the same sentence was to be found inside repeated innumerable times. As this great barrel slowly revolved on its axis, a musical bell marked each revolution, and the worshipper was accredited with having repeated the sacred words just as often as the bell rang. The big barrel was the devotion store of the neighbourhood, and men from far and near came every day to have a pull.

The general arrangement of a Buddhist prayer-wheel temple, when you pass through the vestibule into the main room, is very much like that of an ordinary Roman Catholic church. "There are divers small altars, with images of saints and vases of flowers, and incense burning before each image. All around the walls are mythological paintings, especially one fair saint riding on a tiger, which recurs frequently. On one side sits a grand gilt image of Buddha, calm and contemplative, his throne, as usual, edged with lotus leaves. Before him is set a low table, whereon

are placed many small cups of water, tea, flour, milk and butter. These and wild flowers are the offerings brought by worshippers, to whom animal sacrifices are forbidden." And it is to gain the favour and blessing of Buddha, whose image is in every temple, that the prayer-wheels in the vestibule are pulled. It was a comical and yet a sad sight to see our servants pulling away with untiring industry, while the priest or lama showed us round the temple. We were forced at last to beat a precipitate retreat; for the whole place was so dirty and had such a bad smell that we could not remain. It was a relief for more than one reason to get into the open air, and look up into the bright heavens, where we knew dwelt our Father, who desires not to be worshipped by mere form and ceremony, but "in spirit and in truth."

In addition to hand prayer-wheels, and house or temple prayer-wheels, there are *wind-* and *water-wheels*. The wind-wheels are so constructed as to go round obedient to the action of fanlike wings, and are erected usually on mountain tops, where they will constantly catch the breeze. The water-wheels are large cylinders placed upright in a shed built over running water. A spindle, passing through each cylinder, terminates in a horizontal wheel, having the cogs turned diagonally to the water. Sometimes several of these water-wheels are placed in a line across a stream; and thus day and night thousands and tens of thousands of prayers are offered up, whereby the people obtain unlimited stores of merit without any trouble or expense, except the first labour

and cost of erecting the wheels. The device which has enlisted the breeze and the mountain stream in multiplying never-ceasing praises to Buddha is certainly an ingenious one. Then in the neighbourhood of temples there are usually to be seen what are called *prayer-flags*, which are of great length, but only about a yard in width, on which are to be found ascriptions of praise offered on behalf of the dead. These flags are affixed to lofty poles; and, as they flutter in the breeze, it is believed by devout Buddhists that the words of prayer or praise are wafted on the wings of the wind into the ears of their lord.

Just think that for the last thousand years or more this kind of folly has been perpetrated! We cannot but acknowledge the ingenuity and the poetic grace of prayer-wheels, but still their use can only be characterised as folly. We may be pleased and amused for the moment as we see men twirling the wheels round in the street, or pulling them at the door of a house, or in a temple, or causing them to revolve in the breeze or in the water; but when we think at length, and soberly, of what the whole thing means, surely our hearts are grieved that any of our fellow-creatures should be so foolish and superstitious as to think that prayer offered in such ways could be acceptable to the Divine Being they desire to worship!

Thank God, Christian missionaries are labouring amongst the Buddhists of many lands, and are imparting unto them the teaching of Jesus Christ on prayer as on every other duty and privilege of the Christian calling. I am sure my young readers join me in the earnest desire that our Buddhist brethren, instead of



COLOSSAL FIGURE OF BUDDHA, CEYLON.

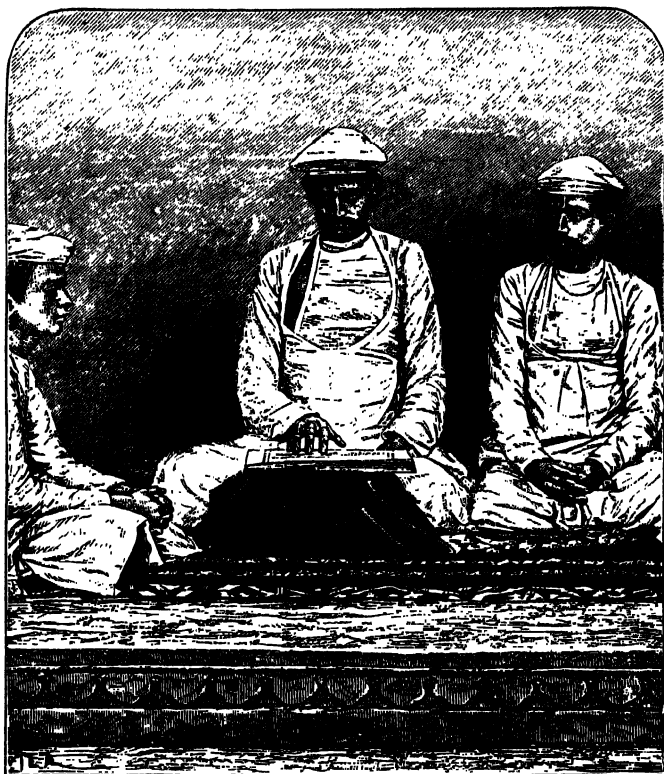




twirling round in a cylinder, Om Mani Padmi Hom, may ere long be heard repeating with their lips, because they accept with their minds and hearts, the beautiful prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen."



BUDDHIST PRAYER WHEEL



BRAHMINS AT PRAYER.

V.

*EASTERN PROVERBS.*

**I** HOPE my young readers are interested in proverbs; for they are, as Lord Bacon has said, "the genius, wit, and spirit of a nation." In all probability a glance at the proverbs of the East will help us to understand the people of India, by

throwing sidelights upon their feelings and convictions, as well as upon their manners and customs.

A writer in Chambers' *Encyclopædia* remarks truly that "From the earliest historical times, proverbs have been household words, not merely among the people at large, but among the greatest and wisest of men. The prodigious amount of wisdom and good sense they contain, the spirit of justice and kindness they breathe, their prudential rules for every stage and rank, their poetry, bold imagery and passion, their wit and satire, and a thousand other qualities, have, by universal consent, made them the most favourite mode of imparting hints, counsels, and warnings."

The same writer, in speaking of the origin of proverbs, is inclined to think that the majority even of our European proverbs have come from the East, and have been handed down from the remotest antiquity. He says : "From the East they were for the most part imported into Greece, thence to Rome, and from thence they were scattered all over Europe, and partly brought back again, slightly altered, to the East. Even certain Jewish proverbs quoted by Christ and the Apostles, which hitherto did not seem to offer any analogy in other languages, might be traced back to India, where they had existed for many long centuries before they found their way into the popular speech of Palestine."

Yes, there can be little doubt that the East is the original home of the world's proverbs ; and this thought should make our study of the proverbs of India all the more attractive. One of the most striking traits of

Eastern life is the hospitality of the people, and this sentiment or virtue has found expression in a very worthy proverb which says, "The tree does not withdraw its shade even from the woodcutter." By this is meant that a man must show hospitality to foes as well as friends if such should claim hospitality from him. "The tree does not withdraw its shade even from the woodcutter." A householder has to be "no respecter of persons," according to the saying, "Straw, room, water, and gentle words are never to be refused in good men's houses." An Indian poet has declared,

"Prosperity dwells on his floor  
Who cheerfully doth tend  
His guest, and ever proveth true  
His liberality."

This sentiment is like to that expressed by Solomon in that proverb of his which says, "The liberal soul shall be made fat ; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

The universal interest taken in marriage in India is hit off in the common proverb, "Tell a thousand lies and promote a marriage." Every Hindu marries ; for the wedded state is considered essential as well for personal comfort as for the general welfare of society. It is considered a disgrace for a woman not to have a husband ; so that parents are in a constant state of anxiety and unrest until they have got their daughters supplied with partners in life. Unfortunately, lying is not considered a disgrace, except when it is exposed ; and consequently much intrigue and deception take place in the preliminary marriage arrangements. The people of India seem to think that "all is fair in love

and war"; and so they say to one another, "Tell a thousand lies and promote a marriage." It is just an Eastern application of the unrighteous Western proverb which asserts that "the end justifies the means."

Friendship is a subject that has given rise to many proverbs in India as in other countries. The Hindus say, with rather a poor opinion of human nature, "There cannot be friendship between a poor man and a rich man"; and again, "Time that impairerth every-thing impairerth friendship also." The following saying is more just and wise:

"Keep clear, though in thy house they smile,  
From friends who out of doors revile."

I like also the proverb, "Adversity is the touchstone of friendship"; and this also is a shrewd remark, that "a false friend is like a pot of poison with a surface of milk"; but perhaps best of all is the grand saying, "There is one friend, even religion, who will never forsake us."

With regard to "bad company," there is a proverb which declares, "Avoid evil companions; for a piece of charcoal if it be hot burneth, and if cold it blackeneth the hand." It is equivalent to the Apostolic saying—"Evil communications corrupt good manners." According to a Hindu rhymester,

"Join the vile, and vile you'll be  
In the eyes of those who see."

Or to put it another way,

"If you stand where you ought not,  
Why be shocked when shame is got?"

Poverty is something that the people of India, even though there is so much of it in the land, perhaps because there is so much, look upon with abhorrence. The aims of the people, and the very dreams of the people, are for wealth, without which life is considered scarcely worth living. Yet how few obtain wealth ! The proverb of Solomon finds expression in India from countless lips, and in very nearly the same words—“The rich man’s wealth is his strong city ; the destruction of the poor is their poverty.” The Hindus say of poverty,

“It brings no happiness in this,  
And for the world to come no bliss.”

Is it not a dark saying ? How much better is the teaching of Christ who bade the poor strive to be content with such things as they had, and who held forth at least a future recompense of reward in the beautiful words, “Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

There is much wisdom in the string of proverbs which I shall now give, and they need no explanatory comment : “As rain to the parched field, so is meat to one oppressed with hunger.” “Knowledge produceth humility.” “Show fortitude in adversity, and moderation in prosperity.” “The knowing man is the strong man.” “Good fortune is the offspring of our endeavours.” “Gentle lips provoke no scorner.” “When you ask for counsel, take it.” “Alms are the salt of riches.” “Helping neighbours help them truly.” “Every door may be shut but death’s door.”

Then I have collected also a series of proverbs

which have been expressed in poetic form. These also speak for themselves.

“Who wish their house a house to be,  
Must live from idle follies free.”

“Like elephants when arrows shower  
The great are firm in ruin’s hour.”

“When comes the fitting moment rare,  
What’s hard to do, do then and there.”

“Think, then resolve : ’tis credit none  
To say ‘ Let’s think,’ when work’s begun.”

“If but wisdom fill his mouth,  
What concerns his age or youth ?”

“Will the lamp become less bright  
If an infant hold its light ?”

“Riches, like a woman’s charms,  
Fly away like ghostly forms.”

“If at first you fail to rule,  
Do not think to rule at all.”

“Stubborn folks are always wrong—  
Can you straighten puppy’s tail ?”

“Wash a bear-skin every day,  
Will its blackness go away ?”

“Talk is easy, virtue hard,  
We may teach yet not regard.”

Now let me illustrate, by a story or two, some of the most famous Indian proverbs. There is one on *generosity*, which had its rise in the lavish liberality of a Mohammedan emperor. The proverb is, “As generous as Kuttub.” This prince ascended the throne of Lahore, in the year 1205. He was the



founder of the dynasty of the Slave Kings, and was the first Moslem monarch who from choice established his capital city in India. Kuttub was a born soldier, and victory attended his arms from one end of Hindustan to another. He was also the builder of the wonderful tower of Delhi, called the Kuttub Minar, which is one of the wonders of the world. Sir William Sullivan, writing of this prince, says: "Kuttub possessed in its greatest perfection, the Eastern virtue of generosity. Long before he ascended the throne he was celebrated as 'the bestower of lakhs,' and for centuries after his time, when a prince was marked for his liberality, his subjects said, 'He is as generous as Kuttub.'" Generosity has always been admired in the East by Hindus as well as Moslems, and it is a common saying amongst the former, that "To feed the hungry and the poor is a nobler deed than to sacrifice to the gods."

There is another Moslem proverb very common in Northern India, which runs, "Delhi is still far off." I have explained the derivation of this saying at considerable length in my book entitled "Studies in Mohammedanism," in the chapter on proverbs, to which I would refer all who are interested in this subject. Suffice it to say here, that "Delhi is still far off" is equivalent to the English proverb, "There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip."

The wisdom of "minding one's own business," or, as the Hindus say, "Meddle not, suffer not," is very often in native circles illustrated by the story of "The Washerman, the Dog, and the Donkey." The tale goes, that a certain dhobie or washerman, who



STREET SCENE IN DELHI.



made white the clothes of a large village, procured a donkey to carry the clothes, and a dog to guard his house. It happened, one night, that six burglars attempted to break into the dhobie's house, and though the dog heard them he did not bark. Thereupon the donkey remarked, "O dog, why are you so lazy? Robbers are come, and are lurking about to rob our master's house." "Let them do as they please," replied the dog, "for on former similar occasions when I have barked and aroused our master, he has not seemed particularly grateful. Anyway, it is no affair of yours, my dear friend."

But the donkey thought differently, for he stood up on his legs, and, after saying, "I will call and rouse the master," he began to bray like thunder. The robbers heard and were afraid. The washerman heard and was angry. But still the donkey continued his braying in hopes that his master would arise and chase the robbers. The washerman arose truly, but it was to belabour the poor animal for his well-meant but mistaken zeal. "O fat donkey, take this and this!" said the exasperated dhobie, as he brought down a stout stick savagely on the animal's back.

The donkey stopped his braying; the washerman resumed his sleeping; and the robbers, after waiting a little while, broke into the house, collected all the clothes and valuables, and stole away with them. The dog then spoke to the bruised and crest-fallen donkey, and said, "O ass, though I told you you would not hear. Did the master thank you for your interference? Your sore back is the result of meddling in what does not concern you. I am the watch-dog

of this house, and if for weighty reasons I do not choose to bark, it will be well for you to keep your braying to yourself, lest in the future a worse thing befall thee. Meddle not, suffer not ! ”

There is another Eastern proverb similar to this, which, however, carries the thought of non-interference to the extreme. Is there a sadder proverb in any language than the following, which is common in India, though it had its origin in Egypt—viz., “ Do no good, and thou shalt find no evil.” What a terrible experience of the dark side of life must have prompted the use of the phrase at the first ! It speaks of hard usage, of bad treatment, of kindness unreturned, of that hope deferred which makes the heart sad and sometimes bitter. There is an Indian folk-tale which bears on this subject, and which shows exactly what the people mean by saying, “ Do no good, and thou shalt find no evil.” I extract the story, not word for word, but substantially, from the Rev. J. Ewen’s book on India, entitled “ Sketches and Stories of Native Life.” It is as follows :—

In the depth of an Indian winter, a Hindu on a journey was passing through a forest : he was very cold, and, seeing numerous twigs lying about, gathered up a bundle and lit a fire. Indian fashion, he sat down, brought his knees up on a level with his chin, put his arms over them, and spread out his hands. Just when beginning to feel and appreciate the warmth, he thought he saw one of the lower twigs move. Looking more intently he found the twig was in reality a snake, which, being stiff with cold, he had mistaken for a branch of a tree. The snake almost

instantly cried out in pain, saying, "Take me out of the fire, good man, I am burning all over." The Hindu, being of a compassionate nature, obeyed the request, and even went so far as to take the snake down to the river-side, where he dipped it a few times in the cool water, and then laid it gently on the bank.

Such an act merited a kind return ; but to the surprise of the traveller, the serpent spread out its hood, and, with its eyes glaring, said, "Now, my friend, I am going to bite you." "Bite me!" exclaimed the man in amazement. "Bite me! Why, I have only just saved your life, and now you talk of biting me." "Certainly," replied the snake, "and in so doing I am only following the custom of humanity. Do you not know that the world always returns evil for good?" "No! no! that is not true!" cried the Hindu. "Yes, but it is true!" retorted the snake; "and if you doubt my word, let us ask the first animal we meet." "Agreed!" said the traveller, and the man and the snake journeyed together along the dry dusty road. They had not gone very far, however, ere they met a stranger advancing, leading a cow by a halter. The cow was very old, and very weak; so weak that its legs were bending under it, and its knees rubbing each other. Its hide was almost hairless, and every bone could be traced through it. Altogether, it was a pitiable object.

"Ask this cow," said the snake. "O cow," exclaimed the Hindu, "will you be good enough to tell me whether you have found this statement true, that the world always returns evil for good?" "Ah, yes! Alas, it is only too true!" replied the cow.

"Listen! Once I was a young cow : now I am old. I have had quite a number of calves in my time. They are growing up, ploughing the land, carrying water and drawing carts ; indeed, they are the humble slaves of men. In my time I have given a great deal of milk. With it men have fed their children, and made butter and ghee. Now that I am a poor old cow, and can do no more for them, they forget my services, refuse to feed me properly, and wish me dead. Is not that returning evil for good?"

The Hindu, gravely impressed with what he had heard, yet said he would like further proof ; so he and the snake journeyed on their way, and had other encounters and conversations with objects animate and inanimate, who all bore the same testimony that "if we do no good we shall find no evil." Convinced at last of the truth of the proverb, the traveller said, "O snake, thou mayest bite me, only suffer me first to say farewell to my wife and children, who live near by." "Certainly," replied the serpent, "but be quick ! I shall stay here till you come back." The man departed with alacrity ; but when he told his wife of the promise he had given the snake she wept and bewailed and refused to let him go out of her sight. So together the husband and wife returned to the snake, which was awaiting the arrival of its victim with eagerness.

"One moment, O snake, if you please," said the wife. "When you have bitten my husband, and he has succumbed to your poison, what shall I do with all these children?" "This is somewhat embarrassing, certainly," replied the snake, "You were not by

when I said I would bite your husband, and of course I never thought of you nor the children. But I will tell you what I will do. I have travelled a great deal, and in my travels have discovered a very destructive powder: it is so powerful that if you but put a very little of it on your greatest enemy, he will shrivel up and crumble into dust." "Excellent," cried the woman. "Give me some before you bite my husband!" The unsuspecting snake gave the powder, and as soon as she received it the woman cast it on the reptile, which was reduced to dust, thereby to the end returning evil for good.

This wonderful story is only a folk-tale, of course, but reading between the lines we see how deep-grained is their distrust of each other amongst the people of the East. The cow and the snake are only made to say what the human beings of India think, that all too often kindness is recompensed by unkindness and helpful services by ingratitude. Thus the inexpressibly sad proverb has gained general currency, "Do no good and thou shalt find no evil." It is only fair to say, however, that the people of the East are not as bad as their creed; for very often they do show kindness to each other, and do good in various ways.

I have already called attention to proverbs inculcating hospitality and generous charity. Another kindred saying might be mentioned, which declares that "the sandal tree perfumes the axe that fells it." Sandal wood, with its fragrant smell, is much used in the East for boxes, beads, toys, and other articles, and consequently the woodman does not spare the tree. Yet "the sandal tree perfumes the axe that



fells it." Could the doctrines of the forgiveness of injuries and the overcoming of evil with good be more beautifully expressed? As a set-off, and a powerful set-off, against the selfish proverb, "Do no good and thou shalt find no evil," we may place this generous one, "The sandal tree perfumes the axe that fells it." According to the Mahabharata, "Forgiveness is an ornament of the strong, and to do good is the supreme peace."

"Pepper to Hindustan" is a proverb that answers to our English saying, "Coals to Newcastle." The Greeks also say, or used to say, "Owls to Athens." The Jews remark, "Enchantments to Egypt"; the Germans say, "Deals to Norway"; and in the Middle Ages it was a common cry, "Indulgences to Rome!" These variations of the same proverb show us how in both the East and the West the same popular ideas prevail on certain subjects, and are apt to formulate themselves into proverbial sayings.

The Hindus have a shrewd saying with respect to greed, avarice, and the heaping up of riches—viz., that "Nothing but dust will fill the eye of man." The following is utter folly, however—"He who is bitten by a snake may escape, but not he on whom the evil eye has fallen." There is a proverb in India with respect to children which I have not met with elsewhere. Coopoosewamey, the author of "Everyday Life in South India," refers to it when he says, speaking of his childhood's days, "Sometimes in the early morning, and especially in the rainy or winter season, when the older people in the house draw their large white sheets closely around them, I used to feel

cold ; but no one took much notice of me. My father would say, 'Children and the legs of a stool don't feel cold'; and he would send me out into the sunshine, telling me that that would warm me."

The tyranny of custom, which is strong in all lands, but which is perfect slavery in India, is well shown in the proverb which says, "We must walk as the village walks," and again in the proverb which declares that "If one lives in a country where all go naked, one must do the same." An orthodox Hindu would as soon think of trying to fly as of daring to be singular in his dress, habits, or rules of conduct. These matters are all arranged by custom ; and woe be to the man who asserts his freedom of thought or action. We can see then what courage is required for a Hindu to become a Christian.

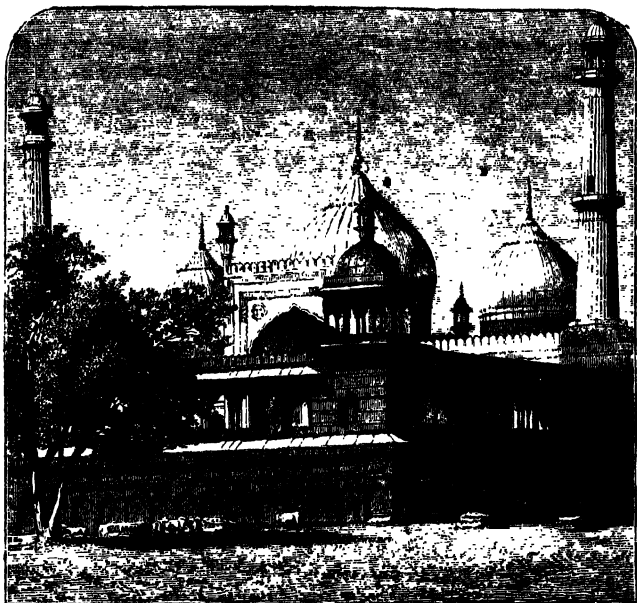
There is a popular proverb with regard to looking at all the sides of a question ere deciding on weighty matters, which is specially applicable to hasty, impulsive, or passionate people. The proverb is, "Strike, but hear." It conveys more meaning than the saying, "Think before you speak," though it is akin to it. To an angry father, to a jealous husband, to a suspicious and wrathful king or ruler, the Hindus say, "Strike, but hear." The hope is of course that if the angry person can only be induced to hear, he will, in all probability, not strike at all, or temper justice with mercy.

The people of India dislike changes, and are loth to undertake anything new. They "hasten slowly" in all truth. It is amusing to notice with what evident distrust and suspicion they treat any suggestion of

But I must close this chapter, else I shall lay myself open to the charge of exhausting the patience of my readers, and shall be rebuked by a proverb quoted by Archbishop Trench, which says of a too wordy writer—"He leaves nothing in his inkstand."



HINDU.



THE JUMNA MUSJID, DELHI

## VI.

### *THE PEACOCK THRONE.*

**B**EFORE proceeding to tell the story of the famous Peacock Throne of Delhi, which for centuries was the symbol of the Mohammedan power in India, I shall say just a word or two concerning peacocks in general. Peacocks or peafowl are natives of the East Indies, though they are now to be found all the world over. These birds, of course, as we all know, are remarkable for the magnificence of their plumage, and especially for the splendid train,

popularly called the tail, which is capable of being erected and spread out into a great disk. "The blue of the neck, the green and black of the back and wings, the brown, green, violet, and gold of the tail ; the arrangement of the colours, their metallic splendour, and the play of colour in changing lights, render the peacock an object of universal admiration—a sentiment in which the bird himself evidently participates to a degree that is amusing, as he struts about to display himself to advantage, and labours to attract attention, affording a familiar proverbial image of ostentation and pride."

The peahen, which is much smaller than the peacock, has no train, and is of dull plumage, mostly brownish, except that the neck is green ; but, strange to say, in old age this bird has been known to grow more beautiful, and to assume the plumage of the male. Though born in such a hot climate as India, peafowl can stand any climate; and even in winter in England they have been found sitting on trees, or on the tops of houses or stacks, during the keenest frosty nights. They seem to have a great dislike for the confinement of a roosting-place like other fowl, and prefer to pass all their time in the open air.

Sir James Emerson Tennent, in his work on Ceylon, writing of the peacock, says: "As we emerge from the deep shade, and approach the parklike openings on the verge of the low country, quantities of peafowl are to be found either feeding amongst the reeds and rushes in the long grass, or sunning themselves on the branches of the surrounding trees. Nothing to be met with in demesnes in England can give an

adequate idea either of the size or the magnificence of this matchless bird when seen in his native solitudes. Here he generally selects some projecting branch, from which his plumage may hang free of the foliage, and if there be a dead and leafless bough, he is certain to choose it for his resting-place, whence he droops his wings and suspends his gorgeous train, or spreads it in the morning sun to drive off the damps and dews of the night."

In the neighbourhood of Calcutta, and almost everywhere in India, peacocks can be seen every day moving about in the bright sunshine; and I remember once, at Mirzapur, in the North-west, coming across a score or more in one company, and the sight was truly splendid. In unfrequented parts of the country hundreds have been found together; and Colonel Williamson, in his "Oriental Field Sports," makes the statement that once he saw a company of over a thousand in one place in a jungly district. Let me quote his words, which are, "I speak within bounds when I assert that there could not be less than twelve or fifteen hundred peafowl, of various sizes, within sight of the spot where I stood for near an hour. The woods were covered with their beautiful plumage, to which a rising sun imparted additional brilliancy."

The peacock is truly an aristocratic bird, and for ages in India it has been held in admiration and even veneration, and has been regarded as in some way specially associated with royalty. Sir Edwin Arnold, in "India Revisited," says: "Peacocks are great favourites with the Rajputs. The bird is sacred to their war god Kumara, and its feather was often

carried in the turban of the Ulwar warriors ; and the reason they declare why it screams so loudly when thunder is heard, is because the martial fowl takes the noise for kettle-drums." For all time the peacock will be remembered as the symbol of Moslem imperial power in the East ; for it was on a peacock throne in Delhi that the greatest of the Moghuls sat to rule over Hindustan.

Let me describe the Peacock Throne, and tell the story of the rise and fall of the Moghul empire as associated with it. It is a romance of thrilling interest. The Mohammedans, of whom there are now about fifty millions in India, entered the land as early as 711 A.D., bent on plunder and conquest ; but it was not till the twelfth century that they obtained a permanent footing in India, by the capture of the old Hindu city of Delhi. That was in the year 1193. The hordes of invaders came chiefly through the Afghan passes.

What is called the Moghul empire was founded in the sixteenth century by Babar, a descendant of Tamerlane, the famous conqueror and scourge of the East. The Moghul empire was the most powerful of all the Mohammedan dynasties that have ruled in India, and is the one best known to Europeans. The Moghuls were the paramount power in India from the sixteenth century until our own time, and from them the English wrested the imperial dominion of the East. In January 1628, Shah Jehan ascended the Moghul throne when he was thirty-six years of age, and he it was who erected the present city of Delhi on the ruins of other cities, and who put up most of

the magnificent buildings which are now the glory of Northern India. It was Shah Jehan also who caused to be made the famous Peacock Throne of fabulous price which has been the talk and wonder of the East for ages.

The room in which the Peacock Throne was erected was the most beautiful chamber of the emperor's palace. It was called the *Diwan-i-kas* or Hall of Private Audience, and was approached through the *Diwan-i-A'm* or Hall of Public Audience. These rooms were miracles of beauty, and, according to Sir Edwin Arnold, "nothing in Imperial Rome ever exceeded the magnificence of this royal retreat of Shah Jehan." Over one archway in the hall where the Peacock Throne stood these proud words were engraved, and may still be read :

"If on the earth there be a bower of bliss  
That place is this, is this, is this, is this."

The Peacock Throne was constructed by Shah Jehan as a symbol of his mighty power, and to show off the immense quantity of precious stones he had accumulated from the plunder of Hindu rajas, and from presents he had received at annual festivals from princes and comrades. For a description of the Peacock Throne I do not know that we could do better than quote the words of Mr. Beresford, who, in his "Guide to Delhi," says, "The Peacock Throne was so called from its having the figures of two peacocks standing behind it, their tails being expanded, and the whole so inlaid with sapphires, rubies, emeralds, pearls, and other precious stones of appropriate colours, as to



represent life. The throne itself was six feet long by four broad : it stood on six massive feet, which, with the body, were of solid gold, inlaid with rubies, emeralds and diamonds. It was surmounted by a canopy of gold, supported by twelve pillars, all richly emblazoned with costly gems, and a fringe of pearls ornamented the borders of the canopy. Between the two peacocks stood the figure of a parrot of the ordinary size, said to have been carved out of a single emerald. On either side of the throne stood an umbrella, one of the Oriental emblems of royalty. They were formed of crimson velvet richly embroidered and fringed with pearls : the handles were eight feet high, of solid gold, and studded with diamonds."

This description may serve to give us some idea of the magnificence of Shah Jehan. The Peacock Throne, with its gold framework and ornaments of precious stones, must have been a dazzling object to look upon, and was a most remarkable symbol of imperial power and greatness. The work was done, it is said, under the supervision of a French jeweller, Austin of Bordeaux ; who, after defrauding several of the princes of Europe by means of false gems, which he fabricated with peculiar skill, had sought refuge in India in the court of Shah Jehan. The cost of the superb Peacock Throne has been estimated at the vast sum of twelve millions sterling.

It was on this famous throne that the emperors of the East sat to receive princely visitors, and to attend to great and important matters of state. Bernier, a European physician, who travelled in India in the time of Aurungzebe, had more than one audience with

the Great Moghul, and wrote as follows : " The King appeared seated upon his throne, at the end of the great hall, in the most magnificent attire. His vest was of white and delicately flowered satin, with a silk and gold embroidery of the finest texture. The turban, of gold cloth, had an aigrette whose base was composed of diamonds of an extraordinary size and value, besides an Oriental topaz, which may be pronounced unparalleled, exhibiting a lustre like the sun." Thus the Moghuls of India on their Peacock Throne were the observed of all nations, and the envied of the whole world !

There are various anecdotes related in association with the Peacock Throne, which are full of interest. For instance, it was from this throne or from one in the adjoining room that the Great Moghuls dispensed justice as the chief magistrates of the realm. They prided themselves on receiving impartially all applicants, whether rich or poor; and in their way doubtless they tried to strike an even balance in all cases, though sometimes they sought to serve themselves while serving others. Let me give a case in point.

It is said that on one occasion a young man appeared before Shah Jehan declaring that his father was dead, and that his mother had taken possession of the family fortune, amounting to two hundred thousand rupees, and would give no share of it to himself, though her husband had instructed her to do so on his deathbed. The emperor listened quietly to the tale, and, being tempted by hearing of so large a sum of money, he ordered the offending possessor of it to appear in " the presence," when he instructed her to give at once fifty

thousand rupees to her son, to keep fifty thousand for herself, and to hand the remaining hundred thousand over to the royal treasury. At a sign from the emperor the surprised lady was taken from the audience hall, ere she could say a word in opposition to such an extraordinary judgment.

However, the determined woman was not conquered, and next day she appeared before the royal throne again, and coolly said, "May it please your Majesty, my son has certainly some claim to the goods of his father; but I would like to know what relation your Majesty bears to my deceased husband, that you claim part of his estate." Shah Jehan took this plain speaking in good part, admiring the courage of the woman, and to his credit it has to be related that he withdrew his own claim, and ordered the suppliant to depart in peace, and to come to terms with her son by dividing the whole property equally with him. And thus matters were amicably settled.

All disputes in the imperial presence, however, had not such a happy ending. Colonel Sleeman, in his "Rambles," says, "On one of the pillars of the hall of audience is shown the mark of the dagger of a Hindu prince, of Cheetore, who, in the presence of the emperor, stabbed to the heart one of the Mohammedan ministers who made use of some disrespectful language towards him." When the prince was seized by the royal guards, and asked how it was he dared do such a terrible deed in front of the Peacock Throne and in the very presence of his sovereign, he answered proudly and sternly, almost in the words of Roderick Dhu—

"I right my wrongs where they are given,  
Though it were in the court of heaven."

We are not told what became of the infatuated man. Truly those were days of lawlessness and dark deeds, and many such awful tragedies were enacted in the audience chamber of the Great Moghul, and on the very steps of the Peacock Throne.

It was in front of the Peacock Throne that the unfortunate but graceful Prince Soliman appeared to receive the doom of unsuccessful plotting against the State. There he stood with his hands bound in gilded fetters, entreating in the most pathetic language to be put to death at once rather than be sentenced to die by slow poison as so many had done before him. It is said that as the prince pleaded, many of the courtiers were affected to tears, and the ladies of the harem wept aloud from behind the marble screens, where they saw and heard all that passed.

It was in front of the Peacock Throne also, in the days of Aurungzebe, that Sivaji, the founder of the Mahratta power of Central India, was openly insulted, though he had been invited to the court in time of peace, and assured of a welcome from the Moham-medan emperor. Sivaji is said to have shed tears of indignation and anger at the discourteous treatment he received, and to have hurled words of defiance and threats of vengeance at the Great Moghul. This gave Aurungzebe an excuse for imprisoning his guest ; but the latter was more than a match for the emperor in cunning, and in a short time effected his escape, and lived to do untold harm to the Moghul empire.

But now let us pass by numerous reigns during

which, by internal misgovernment and external dissensions and wars, the power of the Moghuls in India perceptibly declined. We reach the period of Mohammed Shah's rule, one of the most unfortunate of the emperors of the East. It was during this monarch's reign that the terrible Nadir Shah swooped down upon India from Persia, like an eagle on its prey. Nadir carried all before him, and was soon in possession of Delhi, and in the very palace of the Moghuls, sitting on the celebrated Peacock Throne, by the side of Mohammed Shah. It was the fortune of war.

And now notice an incident that happened. Nadir Shah, though master of the imperial city, yet declared his desire to be treated as a guest, and took a pleasure in mocking humbled royalty, by allowing the conquered emperor to preserve an outward show of authority. While the two monarchs sat on the great throne discussing terms of peace, lo! coffee was brought in by an Omrah, the highest lord of the household, who was uncertain to whom he should first offer the fragrant beverage; for he knew that his head would be the penalty for the least apparent slight to either of the monarchs whom he was serving. However, risking everything, the Omrah, with good sense and tact, walked straight to his royal master, and said, as he presented the coffee, "I knew that your Majesty would not allow your distinguished guest to be served by any but your own royal hands." It was a worthy deed, and excited not merely the gratitude of Mohammed Shah, but the admiration of Nadir Shah, who, turning to the emperor, said, "If all your Majesty's servants had known their duty as well as this Omrah,

and done it as faithfully, I should not now be sitting here."

This pleasant scene within the hall of the Peacock Throne is worthy of record ; but while it was taking place sad events were going on without. The city of Delhi was given up to slaughter and plunder, and the destruction wrought was terrible beyond words to express. And for a month the sack of the richest capital in the world continued, until the people were literally beggared by the rapacity of Nadir Shah and his soldiers. Nor was the palace of the Moghuls to escape the general pillage.

Notwithstanding the entreaties of the emperor, the signal was given to sack the palace. Even the Peacock Throne was doomed. It became the prey of Nadir Shah himself. What a prize ! Surely never did conqueror, in any part of the world, obtain such booty in one small apartment as Nadir Shah obtained in that hall, where he had bandied compliments over a cup of coffee with the poor, unfortunate emperor of the Moghuls ! Think of twelve millions sterling in the form of gold and jewels, passing thus in a moment from one man to another as the spoils of war !

There are some students of Indian history who doubt the fact of the plunder of the Peacock Throne by Nadir Shah. They think that it was spared out of compliment to Mohammed Shah, and that it was reserved for plunder at a much later date, and by a different race. For example, Miss C. F. Gordon Cumming writes in her book, entitled "*In the Himalayas and on the Indian Plains*," as follows : "The wonderful Peacock Throne disappeared after the Mutiny

(1857), and no one has ever found what became of it. The miracle was, that it should have escaped the wholesale plundering which Delhi and the greater part of Hindostan received in 1738, when invaded by Nadir Shah, with a vast army of Persians and Georgians." I think we are now in a position to say decidedly, that the famous throne did not escape Nadir's clutches. I do not think there can be a shadow of a doubt, that the Persian adventurer marched away with it when he left Delhi, in triumph, to return to his own dominions. In a work on "Persia," by Mr. Benjamin, late United States Minister to Persia, I find these words: "Nadir Shah returned to Persia from India with vast spoils, including the famous Peacock Throne, now in the royal treasury at Teheran." A statement like this, by one who knows, should settle all doubts.

It is exceedingly interesting to notice that in the breaking up of the Peacock Throne, in order to its more convenient carriage to Persia, it is generally believed that the Kohinoor diamond, now in the possession of Queen Victoria, was discovered. This precious stone, the Hindus say, was ages ago found in a Golconda mine; and it has, from the time of its original discovery till now, been, with few exceptions, in the hands of the paramount power in India. Nadir Shah, from the brilliancy of the gem, is said to have given it its present name of Kohinoor, which means "Mountain of Light."

After the death of Nadir Shah, who was assassinated in his tent by some of his own generals in 1747, the Kohinoor passed into the possession of the Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah, who plundered the dead monarch's

tents. From Ahmed Shah it descended to his son Shah Sooja, and from the latter it was taken by force by Runjeet Sing, the Sikh chief, familiarly called "The Lion of the Punjaub." On the abdication of Maharajah Dhuleep Sing, and the annexation of the Punjaub by the British in 1849, the far-famed diamond was surrendered to Great Britain, and now, as a native of India has gallantly said, "it glitters upon the crown of the queen of our empire—the first of jewels adorning the person of the first of sovereigns in the world."

When the Kohinoor came into the possession of the English it was an inch and a half in length, and an inch in width, and weighed 794 carats. To increase its beauty it was cut and reduced to 186 carats. "In this state, rose-cut, it was shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and was valued at about £140,000. It was re-cut in 1852, and now as a regular brilliant weighs a little over 106 carats."

But to return to Delhi and the history of the Moghuls! With the destruction of the Peacock Throne the glory seemed to depart from the Moslem empire in India. Mohammed Shah, when the Persians had left his capital, sought to cheer and reinvigorate his disheartened people, and after a while even created another beautiful throne in place of the one taken away, and perhaps in imitation of it. However, the power of the Moghuls steadily waned. In 1777 a dastardly and cruel deed was perpetrated on the person of the reigning emperor, Shah Alum, by Gholam Kadir, a Mahratta chief, who invested and captured Delhi. The conqueror marched to the palace and into the Diwan-i-kas, the Hall of the Peacock Throne, and,



placing himself on the new throne, commanded that the emperor should be brought into his presence, when he ordered him to show where his treasures were concealed. "In vain Shah Alum pleaded the utter poverty of himself and family! The rebel general, incensed at his inability to extract the information, jumped from the throne, knocked down the aged monarch, and, kneeling on his breast, put out his eyes with his dagger, while the poor old man could only murmur, 'Why should I be deprived of those eyes which have been incessantly employed for sixty years in studying the sacred Koran?' "

In 1803 the arms of the British triumphed over those of the Mahrattas, and the emperor at once threw himself on the protection of Lord Lake, who cordially responded to his appeal, and reinstated the aged and blind monarch on the throne of his ancestors. "Eighty-three years of sorrow had passed over his head, and poor, dependent, infirm, and sightless, the head of the empire illustrated in his person the widespread ruin which had overwhelmed the empire itself."

For fifty years after the installation of Shah Alum on the throne of the Moghuls, Delhi enjoyed uninterrupted tranquillity under the powerful protection of the British. Then came the sad and terrible days of the Mutiny, when the country was torn with strife from end to end, and when it seemed as if the star of the English, which had been in the ascendant, would go down in darkness. The Moghul once more ruled absolutely in the halls of his fathers, and treated the few British within the walls of Delhi with horrible cruelty and eventual massacre.

But the English proved conquerors in the great struggle, and once more the Diwan-i-kas, or Hall of Private Audience, the Hall of the Peacock Throne, is occupied. The last monarch of the once powerful Moghul race is in the throne room of his empire. His name is Mohammed Bahadur. "He is a mean-looking old man, plainly dressed, crouched upon a low native bedstead, and smoking a hookah. His hairs are white, and what little expression remains in his Jewish features is not pleasant to look at. Before him at a table sit a row of officers in the English uniform. They are judging him for treason to the power to whose protection and generosity alone he owed his position and ability to do mischief. After the most ample and painstaking investigation they convict him of treachery and murder."

Mr. Minturn, in his book entitled "From New York to Delhi," has well said: "Of all the remarkable events of which the Diwan-i-kas has been the theatre, this last was certainly the most extraordinary and the most significant. If the trial of Charles the First was not merely his individual condemnation, but was also the practical denial and abolition of the divine right of English kings, and the adoption of the democratical idea in the Government, then the judgment pronounced upon the King of Delhi was not only the decree of a British court upon a miserable old man, rendered almost imbecile by age and a long life of wickedness,—it was the verdict of the civilised world on the whole line of which he was the last representative; it was the sentence pronounced by Christendom upon the utter incapacity, the childish

folly, and the intolerable oppression of the effete dynasties of Asia; it was the decision of humanity in the grand trial between Christianity and Paganism for supremacy in the East—a decision which it is not presumptuous to say has been ratified by the eternal justice of the King of kings.”

From the Hall of the Peacock Throne the last of the Moghuls passed in disgrace in the year 1858, and was transported to Rangoon as a state prisoner, and there he died in 1862. The Diwan-i-kas still exists, though it is now a deserted chamber; and as I visited it a few years ago, and paused within it to think of the strange sights and deeds it had witnessed in the past, I reflected sadly on its proud claim to be a “bower of bliss.” How evanescent are human greatness and human happiness! The deserted palaces of Delhi speak eloquently to us of the vanity of riches without righteousness, and of power without justice. The vanished Peacock Throne may also remind us of that Throne, the Great White Throne which abideth for ever, and before which Hindu, Moslem, and Christian must at last appear to answer for the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil.





HINDUS.

## VII.

### *STORIES OF CASTE.*

**I**T is not my intention in this chapter to go very deeply into the subject of caste, but only to relate some stories of caste which seem to me of interest, and which, taken together, will give a very fair idea to my young readers of this system, which has been the curse of India for ages.

In the chapter entitled "Buttoo, the Famous Archer," it will be remembered that I said that there were originally four castes—viz., the Brahmin or Priestly, the Soldier, the Merchant, and the Servant or Sudra caste. Of these, now, practically only the first and the last exist—the Brahmin and the Sudra—

though these are broken up into innumerable sub-castes.

There are four things in which the rules of caste exercise a special influence, and those are (1) that individuals cannot be married except in their own caste ; (2) that people of different castes must not eat together, or partake of food prepared by a member of another caste, save by a Brahmin, who can cook for all castes ; (3) that the different castes must keep to the occupations they have inherited from their fathers ; (4) that certain particular matters must be attended to by the different castes at funerals.

It is easy to be seen from these regulations that caste and rank are two very different things. A native of India has forcibly said, " Rank is accessible to all, but caste is not : worth and greatness of mind have raised the weaver and the ploughman in England to the station of peers ; but between the Brahmins and the Sudras the gulf, now at least, is impassable." Thus, in a hundred ways caste interferes with the progress, the comfort, and the happiness of the people of India. Bishop Heber, speaking of this system in his famous " Diary," has said, " The caste system tends, more than anything else the devil has yet invented, to destroy the feelings of general benevolence, and to make nine-tenths of mankind the hopeless slaves of the remainder."

The pride which caste has engendered in the Brahmins of India has gone to the absurd and sinful length of leading them to regard themselves as gods, before whom all the rest of mankind must bow in reverence and awe. To some extent, at the present

day, the people of India resent these intolerant claims of the men of the highest caste; but still subserviency to, and even adoration of, Brahmins is all too common. A true independence of spirit is sorely needed in India on this vital subject, and it would be well if all Hindus would say with one of their number, the poet Kapila, in vigorous tones,—

“ Oh, Brahmins, list to me !  
In all this blessed land  
There is but one great caste,  
One tribe and brotherhood.  
One God doth dwell above,  
And He hath made us one  
In birth and frame and tongue.”

Mr. Minturn, in an account of his travels in India, tells a story of how he inadvertently broke the caste of a Brahmin. He writes : “ I had a little illustration of the inconveniences of caste before reaching Benares, after crossing the river Sone. The coachman had left the carriage to get a fresh horse, and, as he was rather long gone, I took up the bugle, which is carried by all dāk-coachmen, to recall him. No sooner, however, had my lips touched it, than all the bystanders groaned in concert. I asked my servant what the matter was, and heard in reply that the coachman was a Brahmin, and would be unable henceforth to use the bugle without loss of caste, which, as he was a Brahmin, could not be regained. However, it turned out he was a very low-caste Brahmin, and could be reinstated by the payment of a fine, in the shape of a feast to his friends ; so he finally made up his mind to blow the bugle, lose caste, and restore himself by standing

treat, rather than have the greater expense of buying a new bugle. He would not, after all, however, put his mouth to it, until he had heated the mouthpiece in live coals and scoured it with mud and cowdung to purify it from the pollution of my lips."

The same writer, commenting on the subject of caste in another part of his book, says: "Although the Brahmins are properly priests, and the other castes are generally called by the name of some trade, so that they are to some extent guilds, yet a man of any caste is allowed to do anything which does not require him to touch substances, or engage in occupations, which are polluting, according to the rules of his particular caste. For instance, a Brahmin will be a coachman, a clerk, or an employé of Government; and perhaps their most common occupations are cooking and begging. But no matter how menial is their occupation, however poor and miserable they may be, whether squatted on the mud, cooking, or begging, naked in the streets, Brahmins consider themselves, and are looked upon by the Hindus, as infinitely superior in rank to the mightiest monarchs in Christendom. So also any Hindu will be a domestic servant; but he will not cook beef or take care of fowls: he will make his master's bed, and mend his clothes; but he will not sweep the room, or empty the dirty water, unless he be of low caste. The higher the caste generally, the fewer the occupations that the subject can engage in, and the more limited the number of articles he can eat. There are some castes so low that scarcely anything is a pollution to them, and they even eat the putrid meat of animals

which have died a natural death. Still they are very punctilious on the few points which mark their caste."

The fact mentioned by Mr. Minturn, that Hindu servants will attend to some household matters and not to others, is the reason why in Northern India so many servants are needed in the homes of Europeans. There were, if I remember aright, ten servants in my own household when I was in Calcutta.

The Rev. H. F. Blackett, late of the Cambridge Mission, Delhi, in his charming little book entitled "Two Years in an Indian Mission," speaking of caste peculiarities amongst servants, remarks: "No Hindu servant will ever wait at table. Cooks and table-servants are always Mohammedans or Christians, as the Mohammedans do not object to eating meat. My bearer, who was a Hindu, would bring me the early toast and cup of tea, with which every Anglo-Indian refreshes himself when rising, breakfast being late; but whenever, in view of a long service before breakfast, one of the diminutive eggs of the country was added to my repast, he would never touch it, but bring in the tea and toast as usual, one of the Christian or Mohammedan servants gravely following with the egg; for the boiling and eating of the egg implied the premature destruction of a prospective chicken, and that would be a great offence."

In India, though innumerable animals are held in great reverence, and are treated as sacred, yet there are some, such as the dog, the long-tailed sheep, and the donkey, which are held in great dishonour, being regarded as unclean, and as defiling members of



nearly all castes who may touch or be touched by them.

Miss Cumming, in her book on India, tells a story of how some children's desire to ride a donkey caused a great stir amongst her dependants, who told her that only the lowest castes would touch such an animal. Let me quote the passage, which runs : " We had a curious proof of caste prejudice, when it was proposed that the children should have a donkey instead of being carried by men. The servants came in a body to my sister to represent the horrors of the case. Surely she could not be in earnest in wishing to subject the children to such an indignity ; but if indeed it were so, they must with one voice protest that not one of them would touch it. So great was the excitement that as she passed through the public bazaars strangers came up to her in a most respectful manner, to express their hope that the mem-sahib would not think of such a thing, for indeed Charlie-Sahib was worthy of more honour. Surely he might have a pony. Charlie, however, resolutely refused to ride a pony, so a goat carriage was substituted." Thus the difficulty was surmounted to the great satisfaction of the Hindus, whose caste prejudices would have been greatly outraged if Master Charlie had taken donkey-rides.

The Rev. James Kennedy, late of Benares, tells a story of caste prejudice in association with sheep, which is also worth recording, as throwing light upon the idiosyncrasies of Hindu faith and customs. The Hindus are not a flesh-eating people, yet they will eat the flesh of goats and kids offered in sacrifice,

and also the flesh of short-tailed sheep, though long-tailed ones are an abomination to them. Now for the story. Mr. Kennedy says: "We saw once an



LOW CASTE WOMAN WITH WATER-BOTTLE.

amusing instance of the notion of uncleanness attached to this species of sheep. A few sheep were being chosen by a purchaser from a flock. The animals were scampering about, showing, according to their nature, their unwillingness to be caught. Three or

four men were engaged in catching them ; but one every now and then started back when about to lay his hand on a sheep, exclaiming, ' It is a tailed one ! It is a tailed one ! ' as if he would be hopelessly defiled by touching it, while his less scrupulous companions of the same caste said, ' Never mind ! What does it matter ? It will do you no harm ! ' They would not have eaten its flesh ; but their caste spirit was sufficiently relaxed to allow them to touch it."

In association with caste, the so-called *sacred thread* plays a prominent part. Though it is the distinguishing mark of Brahmins, yet other castes also wear it. Indeed, it is only the Sudra or lowest caste which does not wear it. It is the Brahminical thread, however, which is held in the greatest reverence. When a Brahmin youth attains his eighth year, he is invested with this simple badge of honour, of which, however, it is no exaggeration to say he is as proud as any earl is of his coronet. The *poitra*, or sacred thread, is the mark in India of the aristocracy ; and a Brahmin would sooner part with his life than with this emblem of his power and greatness.

The difference between the *poitra* of other castes and the sacred thread of the Brahmins lies mainly in the fact that it must be of cotton only. According to one authority, " It must be made of three cotton threads, each composed of three other fine threads, which must be twisted to a running accompaniment of sacred texts, while sprinkled with holy water from a sprinkler of the divine Kusa grass. The cord is supposed to symbolise the three incarnations of

Brahma, and it must, moreover, be entirely the handiwork of some parental Brahmin, who must himself gather the cotton from the plant, spin and twist the mystic cord, which is the bearer's patent of nobility."

To show how caste at times stands in the way of common humanity, let me recite a typical case which the Rev. J. Ewen mentions in his "Sketches and Stories of Native Life." The passage reads: "One Sunday morning during the rains of 1880, we were engaged in divine service, when we were startled by the crash of a falling house. I happened to be sitting by the door, and, turning round, saw the masonry and beams of a neighbouring dwelling coming down in a confused mass. Shortly before I had looked at the building, but saw no reason for supposing it was in danger; and the shopman evidently had no idea the walls were being undermined, for he was busy weighing out various commodities to several customers, who were equally unconscious of danger.

"The service was brought to a close, and those of us who were present went to work to dig out the seven or eight persons who were reported buried under the *débris*. *And we were left to do it alone, although hundreds of natives hurried up to look on.* Not a man would assist. We appealed in vain, for the only reply we got to our requests for assistance was, 'We don't know what caste they are of.' About half an hour after the collapse of the building an army of labourers came up, and with their aid we dug out eight men who had been buried close on an hour. One poor fellow had a heavy beam resting over his chest. All seemed terribly injured; and we thought,

as we placed them on the litters and sent them off to the hospital, not one would survive. What was my surprise, on inquiring after them next day, to find



WOMEN OF VARIOUS CASTES: MADRAS.

that they had all gone home, not much the worse for their experience of falling bricks and timber."

The entombed people might have died, however, but for the prompt action of the missionary and his friends. The point of the story is that the Hindu

onlookers were prevented from helping their fellow-countrymen, even in the hour of deadly peril, by the fear of breaking caste. When caste and humanity are thus opposed are we not right in characterising the custom as an accursed thing? I am reminded of a Telugu poem which says :

“If we look through all the earth,  
Men we see have equal birth ;  
Made in one great brotherhood,  
Equal in the sight of God.

“Food or caste or place of birth  
Cannot alter human worth.  
Why let caste be so supreme?  
’Tis but folly’s passing stream.”

It is a folly, however, which has a strong hold on the people of India, even though they cannot close their eyes to its evil effects.

In treating a subject like this it is only fair to say that there are some Europeans who declare that the Hindus are greatly maligned with respect to caste. Sir George Birdwood, for instance, in an article in the *Indian Magazine and Review* of January 1892, declares that all restrictions between caste and caste, and even between men of caste and outcasts, break down at once under circumstances calculated to evoke strong sympathy between man and man. This assertion Sir George illustrates by a story or two. He says : “My personal servant in Bombay was of good caste,—in fact, a Rajput. He dared never touch me under ordinary circumstances. But once when I was ill of dysentery, he would let no one else attend upon me, and rendered me every service exacted under

such circumstances of the most self-sacrificing Christian charity. Further, one year when I was staying at Matheran, I recollect the late Sir Munguldas Nathoobhoy, when riding out, coming upon a Chinaman in a most agonising condition of suffering and squalor, apparently dying of an open ulcer of the stomach. Sir Munguldas at once dismounted, and assisted the man home to his own house, and there had the poor fellow attended to and nursed until he most happily recovered. . . . I could fill a book with like anecdotes ; but the round sum of them is this—that in all the amenities, sympathies, charities, and other good offices of affection, justice and religion, which, according to Christian theologians, make up holy living, I have never known man in India, Hindu or Mohammedan, fall short of Christian Englishmen.”

I do not agree with Sir George Birdwood in the conclusions he draws from his anecdotes. I, however, admire the conduct of the caste men\* he refers to. Thank God that there are men even in India, too tender-hearted and noble-minded to let caste rules stand in the way of their humanity ; but such men are choice spirits, they are not the usual run of the Hindu race. As far as I can form a judgment from my experience of life in the East, and from my studies in the subject of caste, I believe that such gracious cases of humanitarian conduct in the face of caste rules, as quoted by Sir George Birdwood, are decidedly the exception and not the rule. It is vain for any one to seek to prove that caste and humanity can go hand in hand. The people of India as a whole dread caste-defilement, and while they may be kindly disposed at the sight

of human suffering, they are almost uniformly kept by the fear of contamination from acting the Good Samaritan. Why, some of the Hindus themselves acknowledge and regret their national failing. The learned author of "India, Past and Present," Mr. Shoshee Chunder Dutt, in a thoughtful and fair article on "Caste," has the courage and the grace to say,— "The sum total of the effects of caste is, that civilisation has been brought to a standstill in the country by its mischievous restrictions, and there is no hope of a remedy till these restrictions are removed."

Caste sometimes interferes with even the common civilities of life. The Rev. S. Mateer, in his "Native Life in Travancore," says that as a rule in that State a native gentleman will shake hands with a European, though afterwards he will bathe to remove the pollution. There are, however, certain special occasions when caste rules absolutely forbid a native to touch a European, or any one not of his own caste. It seems on one such occasion a British military officer of rank offered his hand to a young Hindu noble; but the latter drew back, exclaiming, "I cannot touch you to-day, I am holy just now. We are a religious people, you know." The officer only remarked, "Well, you will shake hands with me the next time I ask you;" meaning, of course, that he never would ask him again. The young prince, not understanding the English idiom, replied, "Oh, certainly!" Caste that can go to such extremes is intolerable. There is a pride about it, and an assumption of superior holiness that is insufferable.

One of the worst things about caste is its innate



selfishness. It teaches a man to think of himself first and chief, and only of others as they minister to his comfort or happiness in this life. Brahmins are, sad to say, not ashamed to acknowledge that selfishness is at the root of their religion, for they have a curious proverbial saying, to this effect :

“Preserve your wife, preserve your self,  
But give them both to save yourself ;  
There's other wealth, another wife,  
But where is there another life ?”

How opposed is such teaching to the spirit of Christ, who exhorted all men to think of self last, saying, “If any man would be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” ! Brahminism is as the poles asunder from Christianity. And yet we would fain hope that the work of our missionaries is making some impression on the selfishness of the East.

I think there can be no doubt that since the advent of Europeans in India the caste system has been greatly modified and changed, and in the large cities, at any rate, has become less strict in its most objectionable features. Still, the country as a whole is ruled by it as with a rod of iron ; and he is a bold man who openly dares to break caste rules. In secrecy, doubtless, with many caste is very often broken with impunity. I have read a story of a European officer at Delhi, who told his orderly, a Brahmin, on one occasion to pull off his boots for him, forgetting for the moment the caste prejudice of the man. However, to his great surprise his orderly at once complied, though by doing so he broke his caste

When the officer exclaimed, "How is it that you a Brahmin do not mind touching my boots?" he received for reply the candid confession—"Sahib, there's no one looking." Let us hope, however, that the majority of the people are more conscientious, and have a nobler reason for breaking caste, when they do break it.

Caste, as may easily be understood, is a most serious obstacle in the way of some Hindus becoming avowed Christians, and the missionary has to act cautiously and judiciously in such cases, and not to expect too much from anxious inquirers all at once. Bishop Thoburn of Calcutta, in his book entitled "*My Missionary Apprenticeship*," tells very graphically the story of his treatment of his first inquirer. He says: "My first inquirer was an elderly devotee of high caste, who was a stranger at Nynce Tal. His ears had been cruelly perforated, and he wore two large, clumsy wooden rings in them. He was a dull man, but avowed his intention to become a Christian, and seemed to have a little knowledge of the new religion. He expected me to provide for him in all respects, and I was unwise enough to assume the obligation.

"I took the case in hand with more vigour than common sense, and soon brought matters to a crisis. Having made up my mind that caste was a great iniquity, I required this simple old man to break through all its restraints at a stroke; and in order to make the work more complete, I required him to show his renunciation of both caste and mendicancy by taking a basket and going to work among the coolies. He very meekly went to work; but when it came to

the question of formally breaking his caste by eating with Christians he quietly but persistently refused. He remained a few days ; but finding at last that he must choose between breaking his caste and leaving, he quietly disappeared. I thought at the time the case had been well managed, but I am not very proud of it now. Young missionaries cannot be too careful to study the prejudices and modes of thought of those to whom they go, nor can they be too gentle or considerate in dealing with them. To the old devotee I must have seemed a harsh and exacting young man, while it is to be feared that he went away with an utterly distorted notion of the requirements of the Christian religion."

Missionaries in India are, however, now pretty well agreed that all their converts should either at baptism or soon after their admittance into the Christian Church renounce all caste prejudices and customs. And I think rightly so ; for are not all such distinctions utterly foreign to the Christian religion, which declares that "God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth," and that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" ?

In various churches in India, but more especially in South India, native Christians have at times been very wilful and stubborn in the matter of caste. Mr. Hough, in his "History of Christianity in India," speaking of the Tranquebar Mission in the time of the devoted Danish missionary, Dr. John, says : "The Christians contended for distinct places at church, and

even two cups at the Lord's Supper, for the higher and lower castes. The latter, however respectable for wealth or moral and Christian character, were compelled to sit apart from the rest, and to have their separate cup. At last Dr. John resolved to endure this anti-Christian custom no longer, and gave notice, that if they would not of their own accord put an end to these odious distinctions, especially at the Lord's table, he would himself abolish them. His admonitions being obstinately resisted, he executed his threat with regard to the Sacrament at least, by melting the two cups into one. This effectually settled the matter. The men of caste made a great outcry at first, and left the church; but finding they could not intimidate their faithful pastor into a compliance with their wishes, they gradually returned, and henceforth drank out of one and the same cup with the pariah."

It would be a calamity, indeed, if Hindu caste were allowed to obtain a permanent foothold in Christian churches. But such is not likely to be the case. The tendency is rather for the whole gigantic system of caste in the East to give way before the demands of civilisation and humanity. It will probably be long years before this hydra-headed monster is slain; but some day, in the mercy of God, it will come to pass.



BANYAN TREE.

## VIII.

### *SACRED TREES AND PLANTS.*

**I**NDIA is remarkable for its trees and plants, which are to be found growing everywhere in rich abundance. Many of the trees, as well as plants, flower, and at certain seasons of the year, the gardens and public promenades of Eastern cities present a sight of glowing colours truly marvellous, and which surpasses anything to be seen in Western lands.

There are certain trees and shrubs with which we are familiar in Europe, that are scarcely ever found in India. For instance, the useful apple tree is not cultivated, except in the North-West Provinces, and there only in a few European gardens. The climate

is not favourable to the tree, for its growth is too luxuriant, and the apples produced are small and insipid. Gooseberry and currant bushes are unknown, and strawberries and raspberries are a rarity. Plum and cherry trees also are not found in India as a general rule. Europeans living in the East at first miss the fruit trees of the West, but in time a taste for native fruits is developed, which are ultimately declared to be delicious.

One of the most beautiful of Indian trees is the pomegranate, and the fruit also is very pleasant. "The leaves are of a rich dark green, very glossy, and adorned at the same time with every variety of bud, bloom, and fruit, in the several stages of vegetation, from the first bud to the ripe fruit in rich luxuriance, and this in succession nearly throughout the year. The bright scarlet colour of the buds and blossoms seldom varies in its shade, but contrasted with the glossy, dark green foliage the effect excites wonder and admiration."

Perhaps the most delightful Indian fruit is mango, though the plantain and the custard-apple run it close in popularity with the common people. The mango tree is magnificent in its growth, and splendid in its foliage. In some parts of India groves, or, as they are called, "topes," of mango trees are cultivated, for the splendid shade they give as well as for their fruit. The season of blooming is about February and March; the aromatic scent from the flowers is delightful, and the beautiful clustering of the blossoms is not very unlike the horse-chestnut in appearance, but branching horizontally.

It is said that originally the mango tree did not flourish in India. There is a legend which declares that this famous tree was first found in the garden of Ravana, the wicked king of Lanka or Ceylon. There Hanuman, the monkey god, found it when he went over with Rama to rescue Sita, as related in a previous chapter. Hanuman was attracted, it would appear, after the war, by the fair orchards of the enemy, and regaled himself with the delicious fruit; and when he left Ceylon he took care to carry some mango stones back with him to India, where he planted



MANGO.

them, with the result that the mango has become the favourite national fruit of the Hindus. Of the mango tree, Bishop Heber once said, "It is certainly, I conceive, the largest fruit-tree in the world." I would add, "Its fruit is probably the most pleasant to the palate."

The people of the East, in their craze for sacred objects to revere and adore, have not overlooked the vegetable creation. Quite a number of the trees and plants of India are regarded as sacred. I cannot give a complete list, but the following are the most famous. The *pipul tree* is sacred to the god Brahma, and the

*banyan* or figtree to Vishnu. The *bel* tree, with its triple leaf, is sacred to the god Siva. The golden *kuswar flower* is sacred to marriages and to battle. The *clithorea* is sacred to the goddess Durga, the *custard-apple* to the goddess Sita, while the *nim tree*, the *cedar*, the *bo tree* and the *tulsi plant* are also held in very general veneration.

The ficus Indica, or, as it is commonly called, the banyan tree, is perhaps the most wonderful of Indian trees. It assumes immense proportions, and has the peculiarity of sending down roots from its branches, which roots, when they touch the ground, strike in and form new trunks, and these again when grown make fresh branches and fresh rootlets, and so it goes on until in course of time the parent tree has grown into innumerable trees, which form groves, in whose shade in some instances thousands of people might recline. A very noble specimen of the banyan tree is to be found in the Botanical Gardens, Calcutta, and another very fine tree may be seen at Barrackpore.

Sir Edwin Arnold, in his "Song Celestial," draws some moral lessons from the banyan tree, which is regarded by the Hindus as an emblem of the life of man. As the banyan tree grows to maturity in the air and sunlight, and is ever throwing forth new roots to bind itself to the earth, so it is with man, who is often merely of the earth, earthy. According to Sir Edwin Arnold :

"Its branches shoot to heaven and sink to earth,  
Even as the deeds of men, which take their birth  
From qualities : its silver sprays and blooms,  
And all the eager verdure of its girth,



Leap to quick life at kiss of sun and air,  
 As men's lives quicken to the temptings fair  
 Of wooing sense : its hanging rootlets seek  
 The soil beneath, helpless to hold it there,  
 As actions wrought amid this world of men  
 Bind them by ever-tightening bonds again."

Perhaps some of my young readers find it difficult to grasp the subtle meaning of the foregoing lines ; but there will be no difficulty in understanding the following, by Tom Moore, who uses the peculiarities of the banyan tree to emphasise his love for his darling mother.

The poet sweetly sings :

"They tell me of an Indian tree  
 Which, howsoe'er the sun and sky  
 May tempt its boughs to wander free,  
 And shoot and blossom wide and high,  
 Far better loves to bend its arms  
 Downwards again to that dear earth  
 From which the life that fills and warms  
 Its grateful being first had birth :  
 'Tis thus, though woo'd by flattering friends  
 And fed with fame—if fame it be—  
 This heart, my own dear mother, bends,  
 With love's true instinct, back to thee."

In an old temple in the city of Allahabad there is what is called by the natives *an undecaying banyan tree*, which is an object of wonderful veneration. I went to see it on one occasion, and found the passages leading to it crowded with eager worshippers, who regarded the tree as very sacred, and who counted it an inestimable boon to be allowed to bow down before it in reverent adoration.

As far back as the seventh century this tree was

famous. A Chinese traveller of that date, Hiouen Thsang, in his Diary, wrote: "In the midst of the city stood a Brahminical temple, to which the presentation of a single piece of money procured as much merit as that of one thousand pieces elsewhere. And before the principal room of the temple there was a large tree, with wide-spreading branches, which was said to be the abode of a man-eating demon. The tree was surrounded with human bones, the



TAMARIND.

remains of pilgrims who had sacrificed their lives before the temple, a practice which had been observed from time immemorial."

Referring to this account of the Chinese traveller, General Cunningham, in one of his Archæological Survey Reports of India, says: "I think there can be little doubt that the famous tree here described is the well-known undecaying banyan tree, which is still, in the nineteenth century, an object of worship at Allahabad. But this tree is now situated under-

ground, at one side of a pillared court, which would appear to have been open formerly, and which is, I believe, the remains of the temple described by Hiouen Thsang."

Thus we see that at Allahabad for twelve hundred years a sacred tree has received the worship of devout Hindus. The present so-called tree, however, is nothing but a log of wood, though the priests solemnly affirm that it is a genuine tree. I examined it very carefully, handling it by permission in different parts, and I felt satisfied that it was simply a decayed trunk of a tree standing about two yards high, and forked about half-way up. The whole thing is such a glaring imposture that only the men who wilfully blind their eyes can be deceived by it. Yet Hindus gather from all parts of the land to worship what they call the undecaying banyan tree.

The pipul tree or *Ficus religiosa* is also very generally worshipped. This tree is regarded as occupied by the god Brahma, the first person of the Hindu Trinity. I have heard that sometimes the pipul tree may be seen invested with the sacred thread of the Brahmins, as if the tree were a living being. The pipul is called "the Brahmin of trees" on account of the cleanness of its leaves, which are regarded as emblems of Brahminical purity. Ghosts, moreover, are supposed to reside in pipul trees, and Hindus have various ways of propitiating such uncanny creatures. Bishop Heber says that on one occasion, when he was travelling, he saw an earthen pot hanging on a branch of a pipul tree; and when he asked his servant Abdullah what was intended by the placing of the

vessel there, the reply he received was, "Probably there is water in the pot, and it has been brought hither by some person whose father is dead, that the ghost of the dead man may drink and be refreshed and give no trouble to the living."

Bishop Heber had another adventure in connection with pipul trees. It appears that these trees are held in such veneration that they are never injured, nor cut down, nor burnt by the devout. Some Hindus are actually so strict that they will not allow even withered branches to be used as firewood. It was not for fuel, however, that the good Bishop on one occasion wanted to gather branches of the sacred pipul, but for food for the elephants and camels he took with him in his travels, to carry himself, his retainers, and his baggage.

In the neighbourhood of a certain village, when the Bishop instructed his servants to feed the animals, the inhabitants were terribly angry, and even attacked and beat the men who attempted to cut boughs off the sacred pipul. Such a thing had never been heard of before by the villagers, and their superstitious veneration for the tree led them to oppose the sacrilege. However, the Bishop by his persuasive powers overcame the objections of the people, and the animals were eventually fed. I imagine backsheesh played a very prominent part in the negotiations, for that useful commodity is the sesame that opens many a locked door in the East.

Strange to say, though the people of India show such veneration for the sacred pipul, they do not like to have the tree in the vicinity of their places of

business. Miss Cumming tells a story of a European magistrate who, in his ignorance of Eastern customs, thought he would confer a great benefit on a certain town, by planting pipul trees in the market-place. "To his astonishment the buniahs or tradespeople came to tell him frankly that as these trees are so sacred that no Hindu dare utter a false word or do an unjust act beneath their shadow, their presence in the market-place would make it impossible to carry on business. So these beautifully picturesque trees are generally found apart from the business quarter, near to wells or temples, where their truth-compelling presence is less embarrassing."

The Hindu belief is that the leaves of the pipul tree whisper every word they hear to the god Brahma. In business transactions, sad to say, much lying and trickery are indulged in—hence the objection of the people to the presence of the ever-listening tree in the bazaars. What an insight this little fact gives us into the weaknesses, sins and superstitions of the Hindus. The people would fain serve both the gods and mammon, but the latter proves stronger than religion.

The tamarind tree is another of the trees of India held in considerable regard, though more on account of its medicinal properties than anything else. The ripe fruit is soaked in salt and water to extract the juice, which, after it has been strained, is drunk as a blood purifier. But though the fruit of the tamarind is regarded as wholesome and beneficial to health, the shade of the tree is considered for some reason to be injurious both to man and beast. Vegetation also, it

is believed, does not thrive in the vicinity of the tamarind tree. Consequently, as a rule in India, this tree is planted apart from other trees, and very often it is devoted to the dead ; for it may be discovered sheltering the tomb of some revered or saintly character.

To show how beliefs and customs may vary in the East, let me say that in Ceylon a contrary opinion is maintained to that held in India with regard to the shade of the tamarind tree. While in India the people like to live at some distance from the tree, in Ceylon they like to get near it. Indeed, the Ceylonese build their homes under the tamarind from the conviction that of all trees its shade is the coolest. Europeans who have tested both opinions, incline to the side of the people of Ceylon, and think that the Hindus make a mistake in shunning the grateful shade of their tamarind trees. Superstitions die hard, however, and it seems almost impossible to get the people of India to change their views even with respect to the shade of a tree.

The so-called bo tree of the East, a species of banyan, really the pipul tree, is the sacred tree of the Buddhists. It was under a bôdhi tree, which means the tree of knowledge, that Buddha became the Enlightened One ; and ever since his time Buddhists have regarded the tree as sacred. It was at Gaya, as I have related in an earlier chapter, that Buddha sat under a tree in profound abstraction, and wrestled with and overcame the powers of evil within him and around him. When in India I visited the famous locality, explored the temple, and searched the whole

place for the bôdhi tree, with no very satisfactory result ; for I was shown first one tree and then another, and solemnly assured in each case that I was gazing upon the sacred relic of the past.

The conclusion I came to was that the original tree had entirely disappeared, and left no genuine representative behind. However, according to Sir Edwin Arnold, who visited Buddha Gaya about a fortnight after I had been there, I was wrong in thus thinking. In "India Revisited" Sir Edwin says : "South-west of the temple is a raised square platform, and on one corner of this, its trunk and branches adorned with leaf-gold and coloured here and there with red ochre, stands the present representative of the famous bôdhi tree, replacing the many successors of that under which the divine sage achieved the Supreme All-perfect Buddhahood. The present tree is a flourishing little pipul, thick with dark, glossy, pointed leaves, from which the Brahmin priest, who was reciting the names of Siva to a party of pilgrims, readily—too readily, indeed!—gave me a branch. I should have been better pleased if he had resented my request ; but Buddha is unknown and unhonoured upon his own ground by the Sivaites, although it is his name which has made the place famous, and which brings these countless millions."

Whatever suspicion or doubt we may have with regard to the authenticity of the sacred bo tree at Buddha Gaya, it is generally believed there can be none with regard to the bo tree at Anarajapoorā in Ceylon. It is an historical fact that a branch was taken from the tree at Gaya more than two thousand

years ago, and planted by King Tissa at Anarajapoorā, where it speedily took root, and in time became a great tree.

It is seriously affirmed by competent critics that the present tree is the identical one planted by the Buddhist monarch B.C. 288. Trees do not die of old



THE BO TREE, CEYLON.

age in the proper sense of the term, and if uninjured there is no limit to the duration of their life. The one at Anarajapoorā is believed to have escaped destruction in times of war, and though it is known to have suffered somewhat by storms, it still remains an old but vigorous tree, and is amongst the Buddhists an object of special veneration on account of its great



age and sacred associations. Devout Buddhist pilgrims travel from all parts of the East to Ceylon to pay homage to their renowned bo tree ; and they are happy beyond all words to express if they can but secure a few leaves which, "severing themselves," may chance to fall from the tree, which is sacred to their lord, Gautama Buddha.

Amongst *plants* in India the *tulsi* or basil is regarded with special veneration. It is the sacred plant of the god Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu. The story goes that a woman named Tulsi became a saint, and engaged in such cruel religious austerities that the gods were highly delighted, and asked her what they could do by way of reward. Tulsi replied to the effect that she would like to become the wife of Vishnu ; but the god had a wife already, named Lakshmi, and when the latter heard of the request she cursed the female saint and turned her into a plant. However, Vishnu by way of compensation told Tulsi that he would take the form of a stone, and ever remain by her side on earth.

The Hindus believe all this nonsense, and keep a Shalgram, which is a black, hollow, nearly round stone about the size of a watch, in their houses, with one leaf of the tulsi plant under it and another upon it. And the tulsi plant itself is tended with the most assiduous care. Usually such a plant may be found just outside the door, and it is watered daily. During the two hottest months of the year a perforated vessel of water is hung over the plant so that it may not be a moment without moisture.

When a tulsi plant dies there is great lamentation,

as if a human being had departed this life. As a rule the dead plant is taken to the river and solemnly committed to the bosom of Mother Ganges. The tulsi plant is on certain occasions worshipped, more especially by women, who walk round and round it, bow to it, and prostrate themselves before it while they repeat a form of prayer or praise. Such worship is considered to be very meritorious.

*Kusa* grass is also held to be sacred by the Hindus, and forms part of the offerings made to the gods. It is a sharp-edged grass; and there is a legend that once a vessel of amrita—a drink of the gods—having been placed on a patch of the grass, and a little of the liquid having trickled through, some snakes proceeded to lick it up. The sharp grass, it is affirmed, slit their tongues, and hence serpents' tongues are forked; and the grass, having been touched by the amrita, was thenceforth holy or sacred in the eyes of gods and men.

There are other famous and sacred trees and plants, such as the cedar, the acacia, the palm, the coconut, and the bamboo, which, however, I shall not linger over, as they are not commonly worshipped.

The curious custom of giving trees in marriage is perhaps worthy of passing notice. Miss Cumming says in the story of her travels in India: "From time to time we noticed curious twin trees: a date palm growing out of the heart of a banyan, or a pipul tree from an indiarubber. These are sometimes of natural growth, and sometimes grafted by devotees; but in every case such tree-wedlock is held by the Hindu in deepest veneration."

The wood of sacred trees is used occasionally for images. Idols are usually of stone, or brass, or mud ; but now and again a wooden image is seen. Such images are not found in private houses, but only in temples. The nim tree, which is a great favourite in India, supplies the chief part of the wood used in idol-making. Images of Vishnu are made from the nim tree ; also images of Siva, and images of the goddesses Durga, Radha, and Lakshmee.

As trees and plants are held in such reverence in India, it is of course considered a meritorious thing to plant them, not only in gardens and in the neighbourhood of houses, but also on the public roads. In a hot climate trees are a great boon ; and thus both utilitarian and religious motives prompt to the wholesale planting of them. The person who plants a banyan or a pipul, a nim or a cocoanut tree, and devotes the tree and its fruit and shade to public uses, is promised admittance into heaven. Trees are dedicated with the same ceremonies as are common at the setting up of an image of the gods ; and the person who does the meritorious deed, exclaims—say in the case of a banyan tree—“ Oh, Vishnu ! grant that for planting this tree I may continue as many years in heaven as the banyan shall remain growing on earth.”

Thus in various ways the superstitious and foolish beliefs of the Hindus show themselves in association with trees and plants falsely called “ sacred.”

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